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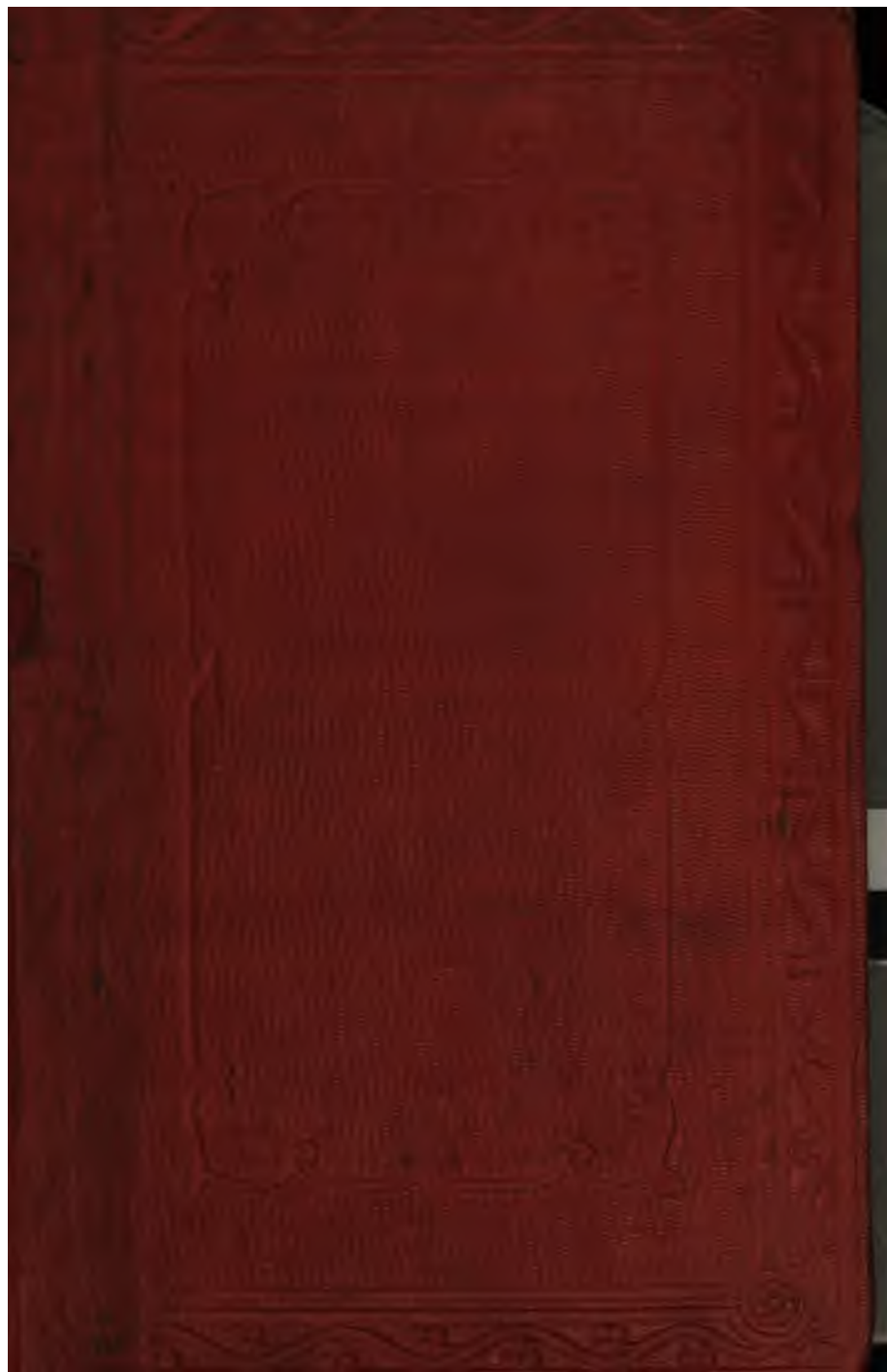
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Yours very truly
Florence Nightingale

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THE
HISTORY OF WOMAN,
AND HER CONNEXION
WITH
RELIGION, CIVILIZATION, & DOMESTIC MANNERS,
FROM THE EARLIEST PERIOD.

BY
S. W. FULLOM,
AUTHOR OF
"THE MARVELS OF SCIENCE," "THE GREAT HIGHWAY,"
ETC. ETC.

Third Edition, Revised.



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TO
HER MAJESTY,
THE QUEEN OF HANOVER,
THIS WORK IS,
WITH HER MAJESTY'S MOST GRACIOUS PERMISSION,
RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,
BY HER MAJESTY'S MOST HUMBLE, MOST DEVOTED, AND
MOST GRATEFUL SERVANT,
STEPHEN WATSON FULLOM.

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION.

It is with great satisfaction that I find myself once more face to face with the million. If the high-priced book produces most money, a tide of success in that form does not, after all, afford the author such genuine pleasure as the reflection that his work, sold at a more modest charge, commands thousands of purchasers, and finds its way to tens of thousands of readers. It is true that such a fact involves an immense responsibility, but it is one from which few would shrink ; and I hope there is not a single sentiment in this book which I should ever wish to retract.

In a book aiming at popular circulation, notes would be an incumbrance, serving to harass and perplex, rather than to instruct the reader ; and I have therefore, when it has appeared necessary, mentioned the authorities for my statements in the text. The plan of the work has been warmly approved by the Press, which has again awarded me a distinguished reception ; and I cannot but express, in this place, how much I am gratified by the result.

S. W. F.

20, *Chalcot Terrace, Primrose Hill,*
May, 1855.

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THE HISTORY OF WOMAN.

I.

THE ANTEDILUVIAN AGES.

OF the earliest period of human history, the only knowledge we possess is comprised in five chapters of the book of Genesis ; and, with this brief narrative before us, it is difficult to realize the fact that the time thus embraced is two thousand years, or more than a third of the whole interval since the creation of man. If we consider what events have happened in the world during the eighteen centuries which have elapsed since the coming of our Saviour—how empires have risen and fallen, religions disappeared, and entire races been swept away—we shall better understand how very faintly this slight record represents the annals of the antediluvian nations. Colossal monarchies must have **grown** up, wars and conflicts have raged, great characters have flourished, religious creeds, differing from any of which we have cognizance, enslaved the hearts of superstitious millions ; yet of all not a memorial remains, to indicate that they have ever existed. What progress had been made in civilization—whether mankind yet possessed any literature, and how far they were acquainted with the arts and sciences, must for ever remain a mystery,

baffling even conjecture ; but it cannot be doubted that the great longevity of the antediluvian patriarchs, extending their lives over many centuries, was eminently favourable to the diffusion of knowledge. Astronomy especially must soon have attracted the attention of wandering tribes, as they made their way into the unexplored wilderness, with no guides but the stars of heaven ; and the twelve constellations, which still serve as landmarks on the map of the firmament, were, if tradition may be relied on, first traced out by antediluvian sages. We are told in Genesis of the invention of music, for which we are indebted to Jubal, son of Lamech, and of the skill of Tubal as an artificer in brass ; while Josephus mentions that the children of Seth, learning from Adam that the world was to be destroyed by a flood, erected two pillars, one of stone and the other of brick, as a memorial of their achievements, and which, by their structure and form, would seem to augur no slight acquaintance with architecture.

If so much uncertainty attaches to the condition of man during this long round of ages, that of woman is involved in far greater obscurity. Of her, little mention is made beyond two or three passing allusions, which however intimate, if vaguely, that she sometimes played no mean part in the transactions of the time. On more than one occasion indeed she became the agent of incidents which still influence the destinies of the world.

It would be worse than idle to inquire whether the account given by Moses of the creation of woman is to be received in a literal sense, or merely as a parable, typifying, by imagery as striking as it is apt, the character of her relations with man. Josephus, it is true, observes that the sacred historian now began "to talk philosophically ;" whence some may infer that the ancient

sages of Israel inclined to the latter opinion ; but this, while it is immaterial as a matter of fact, will always be open to dispute. One thing is clear—that the creation of woman was posterior to that of man, although, in truth, it was designed and predetermined at the same time ; for we are expressly told that “ God created man in his own image : in the image of God created he him—male AND FEMALE created he THEM.” And though Eve was placed in the world at a later period, it is hence apparent, and obviously intended to be understood, that her nature and mission were already defined by the Almighty, who waited only the proper moment to associate her indissolubly with man.

That time had arrived when Adam, with every enjoyment at his command, found even the blest shades of Eden were wearisome, without the sympathy of a companion. He had passed in review every living creature, and, in all this variety of beings, saw none qualified to cheer his solitude or engage his affections. Then it was that, pitying his loneliness,—perhaps, yielding to his prayers,—the Almighty presented him his predestined associate, in whom he beheld a striking and beautiful reflection of himself, softened by the delicate lines of female loveliness.

The emotions of Eve in her first sense of existence could only be conceived by the sublime muse of Milton :—

“ That day I oft remember, when from sleep
I first awaked, and found myself reposed
Under a shade on flowers, much wondering where
And what I was, whence thither brought, and how !”

The abode of the chosen pair was designed expressly with a view to their peculiar condition and requirements.

Planted by the hand of God, the garden of Eden contained, we are told, "every tree that was pleasant to the sight and good for food." Groves and sylvan glades, affording a grateful refuge from the heats of noon, margined a gentle and limpid stream, which flowed through the midst of this Paradise, here laving slopes of velvet turf, there almost meeting the flowers that drooped over its waters. Gold sparkled in its depths, and its banks were strewn with precious gems, described by Moses as the bdellium and the onyx. Birds of every plumage, yet undaunted by the presence of man, flitted from tree to tree, while others made the woods resound with their melody ; and so mild and genial was the climate, that our first parents walked at will through every part of the garden, robed only in their own innocence. Plato, in his *Symposiacs*, which embody the heathen tradition of Eden, on this point confirms the testimony of Moses, stating that the happy parents of man went uncovered, and exposed to the seasons, which, indeed, bringing neither cold nor storms, they had no reason to fear.

There has been much useless speculation as to the site of Eden, which some place in the moon, and others in the mid-air, like Mohammed's coffin ; but which, in fact, was specifically marked out by Moses, according to boundaries then perfectly understood, and no doubt handed down from the elder world. All trace of its existence was, of course, completely effaced by the Deluge, and even the four rivers of Moses now baffle identity ; but Sir William Jones, the eminent Eastern scholar and antiquary, locates the terrestrial paradise in Persia ; and the hypothesis derives a sanction from the phrase "eastward of Assyria," which appears to have hitherto escaped observation. The Garden of Adonis and the Elysian

Fields of the heathens preserved an imperfect tradition of its beauty and its pleasures.

The happy retreat was too soon invaded by the power of evil, which, taking a visible form, inaugurated the history of mankind with a triumph over woman's weakness. Here again we are met by a narrative, which different critics receive both in a figurative and literal sense, but which, viewed in either way, is a sad memorial of our frailty and infirmity. Eve fell—as woman usually falls—a victim to treachery, falsehood, and fraud. Yet even then, there appears to be no warrant for casting on her the whole burden of the fatal transgression ; and it may reasonably be questioned whether our sterner sex, which has so long exonerated itself from blame, is really entitled to such a verdict. Though the Tempter addressed himself to Eve, Adam seems to have been present, and to have lent by his silence a tacit sanction to the discussion. The words are—“she took of the fruit, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband WITH HER.” What more likely indeed than that they should be together!—reclining under the shadow of that tree so “pleasant to the sight,” in the midst of the garden, and, perhaps, on the bank of the peaceful stream by which it was watered. And where could Adam be, if not with his sole companion, with whom he shared, not only every pursuit, but every moment of his life? From Eve's hands, however, he received the fatal fruit, and on her he endeavoured to throw the responsibility and the punishment.

It was “in the cool of the day”—in the evening, as gathering shadows spread over the earth—that the awful sentence was pronounced. Woman was degraded from her first mission, and made, instead of an equal, a slave ; while both she and the man were driven from the home

of their innocence, which they had violated by their fall. Amidst the terrors of night they entered a vast and unknown world, to hide their unsheltered heads in some dismal cave or gloomy forest. Morning dawned only to expose their wretchedness, and contrast it with the blessings they had lost.

The first story of human trial was a sad earnest of what was to follow. Unwillingness to linger near the scene of their former happiness, or, perhaps, a fear of the flaming sword at the entrance of the garden, reminding them of the terrible denunciation that they should "surely die," may have urged the wretched exiles to wander far in quest of a new home; and they are supposed to have finally settled in India. Here, while Adam tilled the ungrateful ground, obtaining from its produce a precarious and perhaps a scanty subsistence, Eve was overtaken by the pangs of maternity, in her case unalleviated by the soothing ministrations of later times. The children born in sorrow, were reared in suffering; and if the mother felt joy in her new ties, could she forget, in her brightest moments, the fate predicted for her offspring? In the fulness of maternal love she had given her first-born the name of Cain, or *possession*, as if this new treasure consoled her for every bereavement; but she appears to have been quickly undeceived, and the name of Abel, or *VANITY*, the designation of her second son, emphatically proclaims its own moral. Often, indeed, must her mind have been haunted by the most anxious forebodings, painting the future in the darkest colours; yet surely her worst fears could never have anticipated the event, that one of those sons she had so tenderly cherished and so carefully reared—that a being so gentle as Abel, whose blameless nature her partial eye surveyed only too fondly, should perish

by the hand of the dark and rugged Cain, was a blow by which any parent might have been crushed, but which fell with peculiar force on the mother of mankind.

From the Scripture account we learn that Eve had afterwards a numerous family, and Josephus mentions that she gave birth to "many other children," while an old tradition asserts that she was the mother of thirty-three sons and twenty-three daughters. It is rather significant of the degraded condition of woman after the fall, that no allusion is made in the Scriptures to the birth of Eve's daughters; and although Cain's wife, who must have been one of his sisters, is referred to more than once, her name is never mentioned. So completely was the sex ignored in the ascendancy of man, that Eve herself, except on the occasion of the birth of Seth, is passed over in silence, and we are not even told of her death.

Abel appears to have left a numerous family, since Cain, in his interview with the Almighty, expresses a fear for his life, as if apprehending the vengeance of his brother's children; and from the incidental allusions to the erection of cities, we are justified in believing that the world now contained a considerable population. An ingenious French author, writing in the *Journal de Paris*, calculates that if Adam and Eve possessed 8 children in their 25th year, in their 50th these 8 might have given birth to 64, which in their 74th year would yield 583, in their 98th 4096, and in their 120th their descendants would amount to 32,800. Cain probably murdered Abel just before the birth of Seth, as Eve, in naming the latter, observes—"God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew," and this was in the 130th year of Adam's life.

The brief allusion to Adah and Zillah, the wives of

Lamech, would appear to afford us but little, if any, information as to the progress made by woman in lightening or relaxing the yoke which had been placed upon her, yet we may gather that the endearing ties of nature were beginning to soften the rigour and the ignominy of her position. Man had learnt that it was to her he must turn when, in the wild paroxysms of sorrow or remorse, his heart craved for consolation, and Lamech confided to the sympathy of his wives the sad tale of his rashness and his crime. Yet we discover, at the same time, that another element had been introduced into the social fabric, which, while it could not but prove a germ of domestic discord, must have tended materially to lessen, and ultimately to arrest, the growing influence of the sex. Within a thousand years from the creation—perhaps while the mother of mankind was yet living—polygamy, the fruitful source of so many ills, had become an established practice, and man had already converted the most sacred institution of nature into a reproach and an abuse. The effect of this proceeding was soon apparent in the general corruption of morals, which at length attained a pitch of debasement surpassing the imagination of modern times. Heathen writers, no less than the inspired historian, bear testimony to this melancholy truth; and the fabulous pages of Catullus, and the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid, might almost have borrowed their assertions from Holy Writ. The violence which overspread the earth had made woman at once its provocation and its victim. But a beauty almost seraphic, while it excited and invited attack, invested her weakness with irresistible charms, and there is reason to believe that she numbered even angels among her suitors. Our degenerate conceptions fail to realize the matchless graces of person and feature which could effect such a prodigious result. We

may, indeed, conclude, without extravagance, that the human form divine then possessed a nobler organization, proportioned in vigour to its more extended term of existence ; and the beauty which retained its freshness through the lapse of centuries, must assuredly have been of a higher and more ethereal character. "There were giants in those days," and perhaps the stature of mankind generally, like the mould in which they were cast, was much in advance of the present standard. The original type of our first parents must still have been universal ; and as the antediluvian races occupied comparatively only a small portion of the globe, they were not subjected to the same influences of climate which have operated with baneful effect in later times. The very face of the earth was differently constituted, and the curse of sterility called for all man's energy to develop its fruits. From the time of Cain, who is said to have invented the plough, the manual employments of agriculture must have made a material impression on the human frame, and to these were too soon added the arduous exercises of war. Yet the posterity of Seth probably still followed the calling of shepherds, and, in their long and solitary night-watches, drew out the first rude outlines of astronomy.

Pausanias, Philostratus, Ovid, and Pliny, differing on other mythological points, all preserve a tradition relative to the giants ; and if we recognise the incarnation of Satan in the serpent, at the temptation, we cannot repudiate the de-spiritualization of angels—"the sons of God," or, perhaps, spirits already fallen, on the occasion of the evidently sacrilegious union with "the daughters of men." Indeed, so late as the time of the Apostles, St. Paul admonishes his female disciples to keep their heads covered—that is, to wear a veil, "for fear of the

angels," which seems to warrant the same interpretation ; and in the Apocrypha, Tobit's niece is represented as being loved by an evil spirit, who successively killed her husbands on the nuptial day, till, by prayer and sacrifice, she was delivered from his toils. The promulgation of the Christian dispensation finally put an end to such spiritual manifestations.

It was to his wives that the prophet Lamech is said to have first revealed the intention of God to destroy the world by a flood ; and he is stated in Genesis to have predicted, at the birth of Noah, that his new-born son would be made an instrument to restore the fertility of the soil. " This same shall comfort us," he exclaims, " concerning the work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed." Josephus asserts that Lamech was the father, by his two wives, of seventy-seven children, of whose names only five have been preserved, and but one of these—Naamah—is claimed by a woman. The gentle shepherd Jabal, who loved the peaceful solitude of his tent, and the minstrel Jubal, whose invention of the trumpet we still record in the word *jubilee*, were the children of his wife Adah ; and the fierce warrior Tubal, who " excelled in strength," and was the first to fashion arms and instruments of metal, was the son of Zillah. We are not told who was the mother of Noah, but doubtless it was one of these favoured women.

As Noah was six hundred years old at the time of the Deluge, it is probable that his brothers and sisters, numerous as they were, had all died before that epoch, but certain it is that none accompanied him into the ark. His warnings and admonitions seemed indeed but idle words to a world given up to every wickedness that universal depravity could suggest. " There were mar-

riages and giving in marriage," up to the very morning of the Flood, when the inspired Patriarch, obeying the Divine injunction, took his sons and his wife and his sons' wives—in all four women, and entered the ark. The shore they were next to behold was in a new world.

II.

THE PATRIARCHAL PERIOD.

OF the second foundress of the human race—the wife of Noah—the Scriptures do not so much as mention the name, though the heathens, in their myth of Deucalion, give her that of Pyrrha. From the moment she quitted the ark, neither she nor the wives of her three sons, by whose offspring "the whole earth was overspread," are once referred to; and women still held so subordinate a place, that it is not till many years after the Deluge, when we learn that Arphaxad, the son of Shem, had sons *and daughters*, that there is even any specific acknowledgment of their existence. About three hundred and fifty years after the Flood, the names of Sarai and Milcah are preserved, making five women during some twenty centuries, reckoning from the creation, who have been admitted to that distinction; namely, Eve, our first mother; Adah and Zillah, the wives of Lamech; and lastly Sarai and Milcah themselves.

It is at the foot of Mount Ararat, the last link in the Caucasian chain, and on the fruitful plain of Nakshivan, which, in its Armenian appellation, still commemorates "the first resting-place," that tradition has laid the cradle of the human race. For a time the patriarchal family

clung tenaciously to this favoured spot, where the melon and the vine, whose juice was first compressed by Noah, still attain unequalled excellence. The enriched soil no longer demanded incessant tillage; the herbage of the mountains afforded abundant pasture for their flocks; and they naturally lingered in a locality memorable as the scene of their deliverance, and endeared by the most tender associations.

But increased numbers, while it weakened these ties, created the necessity of dispersion. In the third generation from Noah, we find Nimrod, the son of Cush, building a city, afterwards renowned by its name of Babel; and in the time of Peleg, two generations later, mankind had become so numerous, that land, hitherto appropriated at will, began to be divided, or parcelled out to tribes and families as their special property. More serious innovations followed: kings established despotic power; wars and forays, terminating in the captivity of vanquished tribes, introduced the unnatural custom of slavery; and violence began to resume its ancient sway over the sons of men.

Not till the time of Abraham have we any information as to the position of woman in this advancing civilization. Then we find, from isolated incidents, that her condition, except in the highest grade, was still one of subjection and servitude; and, in another point of view, the domestic history of the Patriarch evinces a strange misconception, among all ranks, of the sacred nature of matrimony. That the ties of consanguinity were not yet considered a bar to marriage, we have proof in the case of Sarah, who was the half-sister of her husband Abraham; and Nahor, their brother, by marrying Milcah, the daughter of his brother Haran, became the husband of his own niece. Indeed, long afterwards we find these family marriages

persevered in, with the avowed object of preserving purity of race ; though experience has proved, in the lapse of ages, that the effect invariably tends to produce physical and mental degeneracy, incapacity, and sterility.

There is reason to believe that the worship of one supreme God, though not universal, was still very general among men ; and a code of morals similar to that embodied in the Decalogue, was taught and enforced by the Seven Precepts of Noah. Polygamy, however, does not appear to have been actually forbidden, though there are examples of holy men who offered in their lives a silent protest against its continuance ; and it is a remarkable circumstance, that the domestic happiness of Abraham knew no interruption, till he violated the sanctity of the marriage tie. We must consider it a strange inversion of natural feelings, that he should have been prompted to this step by Sarah herself ; and as she would seem, from the subsequent conduct of Leah and Rachel, to have been only following a general and authorized custom, the incident becomes a melancholy testimony to the degraded condition of the sex in those primitive ages.

In all these cases we behold the "bondwoman" placed absolutely at the disposal of her mistress, even in that relation of life which most deeply interests the will, the sympathies, and the feelings. Snatched from their home, perhaps from the roof of a wealthy and indulgent parent, by some predatory band, young girls were sold into slavery, severed from their kindred and friends, transported into a distant land, and given over, body and soul, to the arbitrary rule of a foreign master. Can we imagine a more touching picture of human wrong ? Yet such was the institution already established in the world, and recognised even in the household of Abraham.

Though the story of the Patriarch's life is so familiar, it may be worth pausing on the episode of Hagar, to educe, from its suggestive incidents, another feature in the condition of her class. The birth of a son had undoubtedly added to the importance, if it had not enhanced the dignity of her equivocal position; but the very event whence Sarah had expected to derive an accession of felicity, was converted by human weakness into a source of discord. Abraham, by yielding to her indiscreet suggestions, which could only have sprung from a want of faith in the Divine promise, had made his once peaceful tent the scene of constant bickerings, subversive alike of his happiness and his authority. In such a tissue of recriminations, the sage was unable to pronounce a just verdict; and while affection and a sense of right inclined him to the side of his wife, the weakness of Hagar eloquently claimed his protection. It was God who, after promising to secure the future welfare of Hagar, directed him to expel the imprudent bondwoman from his household. Thus we see that the female captive, after submitting to the last indignity and the last oppression, could be cast with her offspring, destitute and friendless, on the world, and doubtless often perished in the desert, when there was no beneficent angel, as in Hagar's case, to soothe, counsel, and save.

The sacred historian clearly intimates that the sex were still endowed, as before the Flood, with a wonderful power of retaining their beauty, and Sarah's personal charms were unimpaired at what we should now consider a very advanced age. Even on the plain of Canaan, where, under the shadow of the oak Ogyges, Abraham had pitched his tent, "the fame of his wife's beauty," says Josephus, "was greatly talked of;" and she was in her ninetieth year when, on the occasion of Abraham's second visit to Egypt, she

made so dangerous an impression on King Abimelech. This incident serves to illustrate how little security was then enjoyed even by women of the highest rank. An Arabian emir, or prince, travelling with a powerful retinue, is afraid to acknowledge himself the husband of a beautiful woman, lest, on some specious pretext, he should be put to death, and his wife seized by the reigning despot. His apprehensions were in part realized, and Sarah, as soon as she had set foot in Egypt, was carried off from the midst of her family, in defiance alike of the usages of hospitality and the common laws of society. Such was the boasted virtue of patriarchal times !

The book of Job seems to establish that, in pastoral communities, it was not from want of knowing what was just and right that men perpetuated this bondage of the feeblér creation. In the midst of his sorrows and sufferings, the stricken prince, undoubtedly the most beautiful character which the whole history of mankind can furnish, touchingly alludes to his honourable treatment of the sex, in a strain not the less chivalrous from its simplicity and pathos. Modern civilization can add nothing to the refined gold of his sentiments, or to his delicate appreciation of woman's helplessness and weakness. And it is important to observe, in connexion with this subject, that Job lived in the native country of Abraham, almost within the same distance from Egypt, and in a subsequent, and consequently less virtuous, because less religious age. The land of Idumæa, or Edom, where the venerable emir resided, was the first refuge of philosophy, learning, and the arts. Even in those early days, its city of Teman was famed for the wisdom of her sons : its opulent merchants, as Job himself tells us, travelled far and near on their adventurous errands of traffic ; it had its mint, its monuments, its public inscriptions, and

its *books* ! If many were "secretly enticed," when "they beheld the sun as it shone, or the moon walking in brightness," to worship the heavenly luminaries, Job and his friends still acknowledged but the one true God. Polygamy, sanctioned by the practice of neighbouring nations, appears to have been discountenanced here. Job had but one wife, and to her he tenderly clung, even when, in the depth of her anguish, she loaded him with bitter taunts and reproaches. His sons and daughters were brought up on an equal footing ; they shared the same indulgences ; and when the young men commemorated their birthdays with a feast, they sent, we are told, "for their sisters, to eat and drink with them." After Job's restoration to prosperity, the daughters of his second family, described as excelling all others in grace and beauty, were admitted to an equal share in the family patrimony. Their very names are an evidence of the tender affection of their father ; and Jemima, "fair as the day ;" Kezia, "precious as cassia ;" and Kerenhappuch, "splendid as the emerald," though appellations sufficiently expressive, say not more for the personal charms of the damsels than for the refined feelings of their parent.

In the pastoral ages, it was customary for women, even of the highest rank, to engage in employments which would now be considered derogatory, if not menial, and which, indeed, the humblest of the sex have long ceased to follow. So late as the time of Moses, we find the daughters of Raguel or Jethro, the priest of Midian, a man "thought worthy by the people of the country of great honour," taking care of their father's flocks ; "which sort of work," says Josephus, "it was customary and very familiar for the women of Midian to do." Some portion of their task appears to have required no light hands ; and on bringing their flocks to water, they are described as

first drawing the limpid element from the well, and then pouring it into deep troughs, from which the parched herds quenched their thirst. In this employment they were frequently interrupted by shepherds having charge of rival droves, and who, after Raguel's daughters had drawn the water, seized the overflowing troughs, and compelled the terrified maidens to retire. It was on one of these occasions that they were befriended by Moses, who happened to be passing, and with a gallantry not lost upon Zipporah, the eldest of the sisters, came to their assistance, and put their unmanly assailants to flight.

Another employment of women in the pastoral ages was needlework, which is referred to at a very early period by the mother of Sisera (Judges iv. 30) as she sat with her "wise ladies" awaiting the return of her son. The distaff, probably a relic of the antediluvian world, preserved with other useful implements in the Ark, may also have been common, as even the loom and shuttle are alluded to in the book of Job.

The task of drawing water for the supply of the household appears to have been universally assigned to women; and indeed it is, with other early burdens, still imposed on the sex in many parts of the East. When Abraham's servant approached Haran, to which he had been sent by his master to procure a wife for Isaac, he met the maidens of the city coming to draw water at a neighbouring well, and foremost in the train was Rebekah, whose brother, Laban, was one of the magnates of the country. Nearly two thousand years later, we find the woman of Samaria—who, however, occupied a far inferior station—engaged in a similar employment, and met by the Redeemer with the same request which Abraham's jaded servant so confidently addressed to Rebekah.

. Rebekah's conversation at the well with her uncle's

messenger shows that the social intercourse of the sexes was not fettered, in those days, by the restraints which now, as for many generations past, form the most arbitrary institution of the East. While the old man appeared to her in the light of a perfect stranger, a traveller of humble rank, who gave no clear account of himself, she freely answered all his questions respecting her family, communicating the most minute particulars of their circumstances and condition ; and she even did not hesitate to receive from him, according to Josephus, who perfectly accords with Moses, a pair of costly bracelets, and "some other ornaments esteemed decent for virgins to wear ;" amongst which, perhaps, were ear-rings, fillets of gold for the ankles, and the more fantastic trinket called the nose-jewel, one of the first acquisitions of the female toilet.

Among other articles of apparel, the veil, now so universal among Eastern ladies, was already partially adopted, particularly by women remarkable for their beauty ; and King Abimelech recommends Sarah to adopt "a covering to the eyes," by which she will be preserved from the danger of the public gaze. For many ages afterwards, however, the veil was only worn on grand occasions, or by a maiden in the presence of her betrothed. Thus Rebekah, on first discerning Isaac, as she approached the residence of Abraham, is described as assuming this modest adornment (Genesis xxiv. 65). "For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master. Therefore *she took a veil*, and covered herself." After an interval of five or six centuries, Ruth, having been enjoined by her mother-in-law to "anoint herself, and put her raiment upon her"—that is, to assume her gayest apparel—is mentioned as wearing a veil ; and Boaz

desires her "to bring hither *thy veil which is upon thee*, and hold it."

Women lived in separate lodgings from the male portion of a family, and probably each occupied a distinct apartment or tent, as we read of "Sarah's tent," "Rebekah's tent," and "the tent of Sarah's maid-servant." Sisera, flying from the field of battle, considered that he would be safe in the tent of Jael, which, being the women's apartment, or harem, his pursuers, who were at peace with her husband Heber, would not venture to invade.

The arrangements for the union of Rebekah and Isaac show how marriages were contracted in that remote era. Abraham had forwarded some costly presents to the maiden's family,—“such things as were there in esteem, on account that they either rarely or never were seen in that country;” and as the servant afterwards produces “precious ornaments for women,” which he wishes Rebekah to take under her special charge, we may conclude that in providing the propitiatory gifts, due consideration was evinced for the bride. The presents to her family, or rather to her brother, formed her dowry, which was received as an offering from the bridegroom, who thus, as it were, made a settlement on his betrothed. Jacob served seven years for each of his wives, and Shechem, son of King Hamor, when he sought the hand of Dinah from her father, is reported to have said, “Ask me never so much dowry and gift, and I will give according as ye shall say unto me; but give me the damsel to wife.” As to the existence of any affection between the plighted couple, no one gave a thought to such a romantic subject; nor, indeed, could it well enter into their calculations, as the young persons were rarely permitted to see each other till the irrevocable engagement was contracted. Rebekah, in her conversation with Abraham's servant,

holds herself completely at the disposal of her brother, as the representative of her deceased father, emphatically describing him as "the guardian of her maidenhood;" and, to say truth, she seems eager to resign country, kindred, and friends, to bid an eternal farewell to the ancestral roof, for the sake of the unknown Isaac. But women appear to have been reared in that age with these feelings regarding marriage as their first object in life, and considering that their hand was to be given, not from inclination or affection, but as the will of their father might dictate.

Music was from a very early time a favourite addition to the marriage entertainment, as to any other festivity; and Laban reproaches Jacob that, by stealing away, he had prevented him from celebrating his departure "with mirth and songs, with the taboret and harp." Musical instruments were no doubt among the articles preserved in the Ark, as a great variety are found to exist within two or three centuries from the Flood. In the book of Job reference is made to the harp, lute, tabor, and pipe; and the line "they trip merrily to the sound of the pipe," shows that women, by their natural instinct for the graceful and beautiful, had already mastered the bewitching movements of the dance.

The family of Laban, after an interval of about half a century from the marriage of his sister Rebekah, furnishes us with another glimpse of the nuptial customs of the day, when the patriarch urges as a reason for not giving Jacob the hand of Rachel, that such a thing was impossible while Leah, her elder sister, remained unmarried, as it would be an infringement of the established custom of the country. The marriage festivities lasted seven days, as we learn from Laban desiring, in his colloquy with Jacob, that Leah should "fulfil her week." Polygamy appears

by this time to have become an orthodox institution. Of the two sons of Isaac, Esau had married two wives, Adah and Aholibamah; and Jacob, at the instigation of his father-in-law, married two sisters, in whom the instincts of natural affection were thus violated and destroyed. The peace of the domestic hearth was the cruel penalty of this impious union; and in the bad passions aroused, Rachel and Leah, sacrificing love itself to the purposes of revenge, introduced, by means of their two handmaids, another element of discord into their unhappy and divided household.

But though polygamy received the high countenance of Abraham and Jacob, and was afterwards sanctioned by the example, though not by the laws of Moses, it was not unfrequently repudiated by the strong impulse of human affection, evincing that love, when sincere, must also be pure. In a much later, but still a pastoral age, the kinsman of Ruth is represented as refusing her hand, on the plea that he already had a wife; and he relinquishes a rich inheritance rather than contract a second engagement with a young and beautiful woman. Indeed, it is but too apparent that men were fully sensible of the injustice and baneful effects of polygamy from the earliest times; but then, as in after-ages, they were accustomed to follow the bent of their own inclinations, in preference to the holy dictates of religion and morality.

Female depravity exhibited its lowest depth among the Troglodytes, who are described so early as the time of Job as but little removed from the brutes of the field. "They were driven forth," says the venerable mourner, "from among men, to dwell in the caves of the earth and in the rocks. Among the bushes they are born; under the nettles they were gathered together: they

are viler than the earth." The Troglodytes appear to be the same people who are referred to by Herodotus, as living in the Egyptian desert, and whose treatment of women, here degraded even lower than themselves, he mentions with indignant horror. Josephus calls the region between Egypt and Midian "the country of the Troglodytes;" and Strabo locates them "on that side of the Arabian Gulf next to Egypt and Ethiopia." They are alluded to by Homer under the name of the Erembi.

In striking contrast with the Troglodytes, or "dwellers in caverns," the early Egyptian monuments have preserved to us a vestige of another primitive people, who, though doubtless a pastoral community of the East, had apparently attained a high degree of civilization. This lost race differed not only in feature, but in complexion, from other nations of Oriental origin, their colour being light, while their noses were straighter, their hair brown, and their eyes blue. The women had made considerable progress in the arts of the toilet, and a lady's flowing robe, girded by a zone round the waist, was now graced by three flounces! The hair of the matrons was worn under a cap, decorated with a tassel, and among young women it was simply inclosed by a band, and fell in long ringlets on the shoulders.

On the whole, the condition of woman in the pastoral ages may be considered an insecure, if not an unhappy one. Exposed to the horrors of slavery; liable like Sarah to be snatched from the side of her husband by any unscrupulous tyrant; or, like Dinah, to be subjected to still greater violence, she was, on the other hand, neither permitted to consult her affections on the important question of marriage, nor secure, after entering that state, of a proper position in her husband's household. High birth did not exempt her from the most menial employ-

ments, and her social training was marked by the absence of all those delicate perceptions, which constitute one of the best safeguards of innocence and virtue.

III.

ANCIENT EGYPT.

THE cradle of civilization was Egypt. As far back as human records and human art extend—from the earliest dawn of tradition—her name is lisped forth by the infant world in familiar accents, as that of a famous kingdom; and though the term “first of the nations” is applied in Scripture to Idumæa, or Edom, there is no ground for believing that the civilization of the Edomites could compare with that of the Egyptians, however they may have excelled them in antiquity. Of Hamite origin, the Egyptians may have separated from the other descendants of Noah about the time of the building of Babel, when perhaps the feebler tribes of mankind, unable to offer any active resistance to their oppressors, sought to escape by flight from the labour and dangers of that undertaking. This hypothesis, indeed, is hardly reconcilable with the passion of the Egyptians for building, to which they gave such free rein in their new country, and to which, indeed, we are indebted for the most minute details of their social, domestic, and personal history. As they deemed nothing too small, or too mean, for enrolment on their monuments, these venerable relics constitute as complete a key to their manners, customs, and institutions, their attainments and their resources, as the most ardent antiquary

could desire ; and, in fact, we have dug up from their tombs all the domestic usages and religious rites, the warlike exercises, the courtly pomp and circumstance, and even the population of the ancient world.

The Egyptians dated their history from an era as remote as the fabulous chronicles of the Chinese ; and Herodotus mentions, in his second book, that they placed the introduction of Hercules among their gods as far back as seventeen thousand years before the reign of Amasis. Their numerous alleged dynasties would hardly cover so vast a period ; and even these are inadmissible as any evidence of the lapse of time, since it was not till the Shepherd invasion that the whole of Egypt was united under one sovereign ; and, from the confused accounts, it may now be inferred that the various dynasties represented a succession, not of different families, but of contemporaneous rulers. Tradition, in this instance a reliable witness, assigns the foundation of the kingdom to Misraim, the son of Ham, 59 years after the dispersion of Babel, and 193 years before the birth of Abraham ; and it is a singular circumstance that the earliest Egyptian remains go no further back than the era of Abraham. Nor is it likely that Moses, who was skilled in "all the learning of the Egyptians," would have so lost sight of their chronology in his computation of time, had it rested on correct data ; and, from his silence, we may conclude that it was not then promulgated, but was one of the weak inventions of a later age.

Error and delusion, indeed, were the natural offspring of a system which confined all knowledge to the priests, investing them with a trust susceptible of the grossest abuse, and by which, in course of time, they contrived to arrest the civilization, while they enslaved the minds and perverted the character of their countrymen. Their first

conquest was the national religion, which originally was pure and holy, inculcating the worship of a Supreme and Universal Lord, and divinely foreshadowing, as we may be permitted to think, the blessed dispensation of the Messiah. Osiris, a son of the deities Seb and Netpe, supposed to be Saturn and Rhea, was represented as appearing on earth for the emancipation of mankind from the dominion of the Evil One, through whose machinations he was subsequently put to death; but after his burial, he returned to life, and became the Judge of the dead. An equally suggestive myth is presented by the triads, into which the priests divided the creative attributes of the Almighty, and in which the third idea, arising as a sequence, was said to *proceed* from the other two. Such resemblances strike us as more than accidental; and as the whole career of the future Saviour was allowed to transpire in the prophecies of Isaiah, it is not difficult to believe, from the tenor of these ancient mysteries, that it may have been made known, together with the doctrine of the Trinity, at a much earlier period, though it was wisely excluded from the teaching of Moses, lest the Israelites, from old association, should fall under the yoke of the Egyptian superstition. Hence their lawgiver's allusion to the Messiah, though distinct, was guarded and imperfect, tending more to raise expectation than to recall obscure and corrupt traditions.

Looking at the proficiency of the Egyptians in the arts and sciences within a few centuries of the Flood—a proficiency which the skill and invention of modern times are in some things unable to equal—we can account for it in no other way than by supposing, what indeed seems rational enough, that it was a legacy from the old world, carefully handed down to posterity by Noah and his sons. In the book of Job, which also indicates a high state of

civilization, the fact seems to be plainly stated, and the patriarch gratefully acknowledges his obligations to past races.

“The wisdom of the Egyptians,” at least in the first ages, till their religion became corrupted and perverted, was favourable to the emancipation and elevation of woman ; and hence the sex enjoyed more consideration in Egypt than among any other people of antiquity. The code of Hermes permitted but one wife ; and though we learn from the Greek writers that female slaves were frequently introduced into families on the same footing as Hagar in the household of Abraham, there is reason to believe that this was not an ancient custom, but an innovation of a degenerate race. In the bright morning of Egypt’s renown, woman was treated with more respect, and held in more just estimation.

By the laws of Hermes, even the regal authority was intrusted to women, equally with men, when it was their right of succession ; and the descendants of an Egyptian princess, though themselves born in a foreign country, could claim, and on several occasions actually succeeded to, the Egyptian throne. The queen-consort always shared the glory, if not the power of her husband, and was allowed a munificent revenue for her private expenses. This was derived from a tax on the fisheries and the vintage, the former of which alone amounted to nearly £100,000 a year, and the whole of this enormous sum was appropriated by the queen to the purchase of jewels and articles of the toilet, without any deduction for the cost of an establishment. The illustrious lady also took part in the ceremony of the coronation ; and a goddess was supposed to place on her head the royal insignia, consisting of a globe plumed with feathers, drooping over the horns of Athor. A sceptre was placed in her hand,

and she was probably anointed with oil in the same manner as the king.

The pages of Josephus, and the sacred narration of Moses, show us, in their account of Thermuthis, the daughter of Rameses the Great, what privileges and influence were enjoyed by the Egyptian princesses, and we have already seen that they transmitted their rights to their remote descendants. Great pains were bestowed on their education from their earliest years, and a sculpture in a tomb at Thebes, discovered by recent explorers, represents a learned scribe instructing a youthful princess, while his little pupil sits on his knee. Thermuthis appears to have been the only child of the king, and hence, as heir to the crown, may have possessed more than ordinary power; but, even under this aspect, the influence she exercised excites our surprise. The Egyptian sages had foretold the birth of a Hebrew child, whose future career would be highly injurious to their country; and this prediction, like the more memorable incident at Jerusalem, had prompted a royal order for the destruction of all the male children of the Israelites. Yet such was the power of Pharaoh's daughter, that she did not hesitate openly to violate this decree, and, at the instigation of Miriam, even sent for a Hebrew woman—the infant's mother—to take charge of the little foundling, declaring to all present that she adopted him as her son.

The princess is described as going down to the river to bathe, ablutions forming a very important, and, in fact, a religious custom with the ancient Egyptians. From the ease with which she is approached by Miriam, there is reason to suppose that the spot was not inclosed, and that no precautions were taken, by the posting of guards or other attendants, to prevent such intrusions. Ther-

Thermuthis is accompanied only by "her maids," or ladies of honour, and when the fragile ark of Moses is descried among the bulrushes, "some that could swim," Josephus tells us, were ordered to bring it to the shore. The sacred narrative gives us, in a few words, a beautiful glimpse of the princess's emotions on discovering the freight of the little vessel. "And behold the babe wept, and she had compassion on him, and said, *This is one of the Hebrews' children.*" Her woman's heart, uninfluenced by the cruel dictates of policy, instantly yielded to the soft impulses of nature and her sex : Miriam's suggestion was eagerly adopted ; and though the decree respecting the Hebrew children was necessarily known to all around, it is worthy of remark that no one presumed to question the decision, or the sovereign authority, of Pharaoh's daughter.

The lawgiver of Israel modestly describes himself as having been "a goodly child," but we are told by Josephus, who furnishes many additional particulars of his life, that his beauty was of a "divine" character, and St. Stephen speaks of him as "beautiful in the sight of God." While he was still in his infancy, Thermuthis presented him to Rameses, and made the potent monarch acquainted with his history.—"I have brought up a child who is of a divine form and generous mind," she observed, as she placed the future prophet in the King's arms, "and as I have received him from the bounty of the river, in a wonderful manner, I thought proper to adopt him for my son, and the heir of thy kingdom." Thereupon, we are told, Rameses embraced the child, pressing him close to his bosom, as if, by this act, he sanctioned the design of his daughter. To gratify the princess, he even took off his diadem, and placed it on the head of the child ; but Moses, in a sudden fit of passion, snatched it from his

brow, threw it on the floor, and trampled it under foot. Jannes, or Jambres, one of the scribes who had foretold his nativity, was present at this scene, which appears to be referred to by St. Paul, 2 Timothy iii. 8 ; and immediately recognising the future enemy of his country, sprang on Moses to kill him. But Thermuthis interposed, and such was her ascendancy over the King—such her influence as a woman and as heir to the throne—that her adopted son escaped unpunished.

Remembering how jealously the native priests reserved to their own body the treasures of their occult learning, the power of Thermuthis indeed appears unbounded, when we behold Moses, one of an enslaved race, instructed, through her favour, in “all the wisdom of the Egyptians,” and even admitted into the exclusive ranks of the military order. His beneficent protectress continued to shield him from the enmity and machinations of an implacable faction, till, in obedience to an oracle, he was appointed General of the Egyptians in the war with Ethiopia, when Tharbis, the Ethiopian princess, at the siege of Saba, was so dazzled by his beauty, that she sent to him to propose marriage, and on his promising to become her husband, delivered the besieged city into his hands. Probably Thermuthis died about this time, as the next thing reported of Moses is his flight.

That Thermuthis does not afford a solitary example of female ascendancy in the royal councils of Egypt, we have evidence in the pages of Herodotus, who commemorates the affection of King Mycerinus, the son of Cheops, for his daughter, on which the priests founded one of their unnatural myths. Like Thermuthis, she was the only child of the monarch, and his reputation for wisdom and justice, which entitle him to be considered the Egyptian Solomon, may owe something to her influence. Unfor-

unately history has handed down no particulars of her life, but her virtues are manifested in the general sorrow at her death, and Mycerinus, with the approbation of his people, adopted a singular mode of evincing his grief, entombing the deceased princess in a wooden sarcophagus, encased with gold and shaped as a cow, one of the sacred symbols of their religion. "This cow," says Herodotus, "was not interred in the ground, but even in my time was exposed to view, being in the city of Sais, placed in the royal palace, in a richly furnished chamber; and they burn near it all kinds of aromatics every day, and a lamp is kept burning by it throughout the night."

Whether any ceremony was practised at the marriages of the Egyptians is doubtful, no representation of such an occurrence having been discovered; but as their women, from the earliest times, recognised a ring finger, it is not unlikely that a wife was indicated by a wedding-ring. According to Diodorus, the marriage contract secured the wife peculiar rights, amongst which was the control over her husband, who promised implicit obedience to her injunctions; and there is, on the other hand, good authority for believing that it was customary for the wife, as a return for this deference, to give at all times the first consideration to her husband, even to the prejudice or the ruin of her children. Herodotus relates a curious incident in illustration of this practice. "The priests," observes the historian, "said of this Egyptian Sesostriis, that returning and bringing with him many men from the nations whose territories he had subdued, when he arrived at the Pelusian Daphnæ, his brother, to whom he had committed the government of Egypt, invited him to an entertainment, and his sons with him, and ordered wood to be brought round the house, and having caused it to be piled up, set it on fire; but

Sesostris being informed of this, immediately consulted with his wife—for he took his wife with him—and she advised him to extend two of his six sons across the fire, and form a bridge over the burning mass, and that the rest should step on them and make their escape. Sesostris did so, and two of his sons were in this manner burnt to death; but the rest, together with their father, were saved. Sesostris having returned to Egypt, then took revenge on his brother."

The ties of consanguinity, as in the earlier world, were wholly disregarded in the marriages of the Egyptians, and a union between brother and sister was common. The community naturally broke itself into distinct classes, according to the rank or occupation of the individual, but families were not obliged to marry in their own class, and a nobleman might take a wife from the lower orders. There was but one grade debarred from this privilege,—the race of swineherds; and as it was deemed infamous to be connected with the followers of this occupation, their daughters, from necessity as well as custom, married exclusively in their own tribe.

The women of Egypt early paid considerable attention to the toilet. Their dress, according to Herodotus, consisted usually of but one garment, though a second was often added. Among the upper orders, the favourite attire was a petticoat, tied round the waist with a gay sash, and worn under a robe of fine linen, or a sort of chintz, variously coloured, and made large and loose, with wide sleeves, the band being fastened in front just under the bust. Their feet were encased in sandals, the rudiment of the present Eastern slipper, which they resembled also in their embroidery and design. Their persons and apparel, in conformity with Oriental taste in all ages, were profusely decked with ornaments, "jewels of silver

and jewels of gold," with precious gems of extraordinary size, of which imitations, hardly distinguishable from the real stones, were within the reach of the humblest classes, whose passion for finery could not be surpassed by their superiors. The richly carved and embroidered sandals, tied over the instep with tassels of gold, were surmounted by gold anklets or bangles, which, as well as the bracelets encircling the wrist, sparkled with rare gems; and necklaces of gold, or of beautiful beads, with a pendant of amethysts or pearls, hung from the neck. Almost every finger was jewelled, and the ring finger, in particular, was usually allotted several rings, while massive ear-rings, shaped like hoops, or sometimes taking the form of a jewelled asp, or of a dragon, adorned the ears. Gloves were used at a very early date: and among the other imperishable relics of that olden time, the tombs of Egypt have rendered up to us a pair of striped linen mittens, which once covered the hands of a Theban lady.

Women of quality inclosed their hair with a band of gold, from which a flower drooped over the forehead, while the hair fell in long plaits to the bosom, and behind streamed down the back to the waist. The side hair was secured by combs, made of polished wood, or by a gold pin, and perhaps was sometimes adorned, like the brow, with a favourite flower.

The toilet was furnished with a brazen mirror, polished to such a degree as to reflect every lineament of the face; and the belles of Egypt, as ladies of the present day may imagine, spent no small portion of their time with this faithful counsellor. Their boudoirs were not devoid of an air of luxury and refinement, particularly congenial to a modern imagination. A stand near the unglazed window supported vases of flowers, which filled the room

with delicious odours ; a soft carpet overspread the floor ; two or three richly-carved chairs, and an embroidered fauteuil, afforded easy and inviting seats ; and the lotus and papyrus were frescoed on the walls. Besides the brazen mirror, other accessories of the toilet were arranged on the ebony table, and boxes and caskets grotesquely carved, some containing jewels, others furnished with oils and ointments, took their place with quaintly-cut smelling-bottles, wooden combs, silver or bronze bodkins, and lastly, pins and needles.

Seated at this shrine, the Egyptian beauty, with her dark glance fixed on the brazen mirror, sought to heighten those charms which are always most potent in their native simplicity. A touch of collyrium gave illusive magnitude to her voluptuous eyes ; another cosmetic stained their lids ; a delicate brush pencilled her brows—sometimes, alas ! imparted a deceitful bloom to her cheeks ; and her taper fingers were coloured with the juice of henné. Precious ointments were poured on her hair, and enveloped her in an atmosphere of perfume, while the jeweller's and milliner's arts combined to decorate her person.

In Sir Gardner Wilkinson's admirable work on Ancient Egypt, to which I am indebted for some valuable information, there is a plate representing a lady in a bath with her attendants, drawn from a sculpture in a tomb at Thebes, whence we may derive some faint idea of the elaborate character of an Egyptian toilet. The lady is seated in a sort of pan, with her long hair streaming over her shoulders, and is supported by the arm of an attendant, who, with her other hand, holds a flower to her nose, while another damsel pours water over her head, and a third washes and rubs down her delicate arms. A fourth maiden receives her jewels, and deposits them on a stand,

where she awaits the moment when they will be again required.

Women of the humbler classes, as already intimated, were as susceptible as their superiors to the attractions of dress, though they could not devote so much time to the seductive labours of the toilet. Over their stuff petticoat they wore a capacious linen robe, which reached to their sandals, yet never hid from view a pretty ankle, or its glittering metal bangles, studded with glass emeralds. Slaves were obliged to adopt a simpler costume, except on occasions of rejoicing, when these poor children of misfortune, wreathing their faces with forced smiles, danced for the amusement of their masters' guests.

Women, whether wives or spinsters, were not debarred from the pleasures of social intercourse, or placed under any of the restraints imposed by the Orientals of modern days. The wife accompanied her husband into society; and when he received company at home—a frequent occurrence, as the Egyptians were a very sociable people—occupied the same seat with himself, generally a double chair, while the youngest of their children gambolled at their feet. At a *conversazione*, the ladies usually sat together, but at the banquet, they seem, from some of the sculptures, to be alternated with the sterner sex, as at a dinner-table of the present day. Unlike the women of other ancient nations, they were allowed to drink wine, which, at a party, was presented to them on their arrival by a female slave, who, at the same time, expressed a wish that it might prove agreeable and refreshing; while another attendant, following immediately behind, politely offered a napkin to wipe the lips. The privilege of drinking is said to have been sometimes abused, and a satirical artist has represented a lady suffering from an excess of this kind, to the utter confusion

of her astonished maidens ; but we may well believe, as the Egyptian sculptors were notoriously given to caricature, that this is a libel, or, at least, a solitary instance of female intemperance.

The Egyptians cherished a great admiration of flowers, to the cultivation of which, in the garden attached to the house, the women of the family paid especial attention ; and when a festivity was celebrated, these furnished them with bouquets, which it was customary for the hostess and her maids to present to the guests as they arrived. While the banquet was preparing, or after it had been discussed, the company were entertained with music, dancing, and tumbling, in all which performances, as in the other arrangements, women took a prominent part. The dancers were generally young girls, selected for their grace or agility, and perhaps their beauty. A light gauzy robe, secured at the wrists and waist, enveloped their forms, which, as they moved through the dance, were distinctly seen, giving an ethereal character to the spectacle. They sometimes accompanied their movements with music, from an instrument resembling a guitar, played by themselves as they danced, or by clashing cymbals ; or, where they depended more on their own vivacity, they kept time by snapping their fingers. The dance was chiefly remarkable for its graceful postures and rapid movements, though expressive gestures, now sentimental, now ludicrous, added to its effect, and elicited the applause of the spectators. In the tumbling performances, women, rendered supple by a severe training, revolved over and over like a wheel, while others were extended on the floor, with their hands held up by men, who, bending down, swung them round and round with incredible velocity. Egypt also boasted its *cantatrices*, some of whom, as among ourselves, were of foreign extraction,

and hence were no doubt more popular. As musicians, their women excelled, it would seem, on the instrument resembling the guitar, though they also played the harp, lyre, tambourine, and cymbals. It does not appear that they performed on the flute and pipe, which were in early use among the Egyptians, though probably played only by men.

Women regularly participated in the public festivals; and Herodotus describes, with his usual quaint brevity, their share in the festival of Diana, at the city of Bubastis, which, however, does not apply to the day of Egypt's prime. "Now when they are being conveyed to the city Bubastis," says the historian, "they act as follows; for men and women embark together, and great numbers of both sexes in every barge: some of the women have castanets on which they play, and the men play on the flute during the whole voyage: the rest of the women and men sing, and clap their hands together at the same time. When in the course of the passage they come to any town, they lay their barge near to land, and do as follows: some of the women do as I have described: others shout and scoff at the women of the place: some dance, and others stand up . . . this they do at every town by the river side."

Like most of the old religions, the creed of Egypt, while reserving the hierarchical functions to men, admitted women to sacred offices, and the Pallacides were selected from the families of the highest nobles, and even of kings. The sistra was only intrusted to the wives and daughters of the chief pontiff, or to ladies of royal extraction, and, indeed, was frequently carried by the queen herself. A place of retirement for women, in some degree resembling a Roman Catholic convent, but not entailing a vow of celibacy, was attached to the principal

religious edifices, and formed a sort of school, at which women were instructed in the duties of the temple. When their education was completed, they officiated as priestesses and minstrels, took part in the sacred processions, and filled other and less important offices connected with the celebration of public worship.

The amusements of women were various, and give a favourable idea of the character of the people, which, far from being of the gloomy cast usually supposed, was extremely gay and sprightly. Besides the resources of music, singing, and dancing, the two last of which were undoubtedly cultivated by ladies of the highest rank, they enjoyed, as we have seen, the greatest relaxations of social intercourse, indulged in calls and parties, partook of banquets, drove out in their chariots, joined in pleasure-excursions on the Nile, and shared in public festivities. At home, their favourite diversion was the game at ball, which, from the play and suppleness which it gave to the limbs, and the activity it required—for it embraced both running and leaping—promoted a freedom of carriage especially captivating in the female form. Dice, though a popular game with the Egyptians, were chiefly appropriated to men; but ladies often amused themselves at draughts, and a sculpture in a royal tomb represents a king playing at draughts with the dames of the court.

Embroidery, stringing of beads, needlework, and the flower-garden, afforded, as in our own day, attractive occupations to ladies of rank, when they could spare time from the pleasures of society, or the enticing calls of the toilet. Their needles, some specimens of which have been discovered, were of bronze, and were evidently used with great dexterity. Women of the humbler classes occupied themselves with the spindle, but, according to Herodotus, were not subjected to the severer

labour of the loom, which was undertaken entirely by men. A portion of the day, the same authority informs us, was devoted by the mistress of the house to marketing, and in the evening, it was customary for the women of the family to sit on the roof, and converse with their neighbours. The only professional calling assigned to women was that of the accoucheur, which the prejudice of ancient times pronounced their exclusive office.

In rural districts women were still employed in the unsuitable occupations of pastoral days—the tending of sheep and cattle, and the carrying of water; and to these were gradually added other duties of the farm; such as weeding, sheafing, and gleaning. During a period of many ages, however, all heavy and laborious tasks were assigned by Egyptian usage to the more vigorous hands of man.

As woman presided over the birth, so she was appointed a special mourner at the death, and at the imposing funeral, of the ancient Egyptian. When a soul had departed, women, hired for the occasion, poured forth, in a mournful train, from the house, throwing dust on their heads, and vehemently lamenting the deceased, whose virtues they proclaimed in a sorrowful and passionate chant. This ceremony was repeated daily during the ten weeks that the body remained in the hands of the embalmers, when the women of the family, having their hair bound up with fillets, and their busts exposed, followed it to the tomb, in company with the other relatives, beating their naked bosoms as they walked along, and singing a dirge suitable to the melancholy occasion.

Sepulture did not always follow immediately on embalming; and an instance is recorded, in a sepulchral inscription, of a woman remaining unburied for a whole

year, intimating the unwillingness of her surviving relatives, perhaps of an attached husband, to part with her remains. Bodies were usually given to the embalmers as soon as life expired ; but this was not invariably the case, and Herodotus mentions that those of women of rank, or who had been remarkable for their beauty, were retained for several days—a dangerous usage in the warm climate of Egypt.

It was natural that a people who treated the softer sex with so much consideration, should place a high value on virtue ; and we find that the seventh commandment of the Hebrews was a statutory law with the Egyptians, who punished its violation with great severity. Yet as death was the penalty enforced by some contemporary nations, we can recognise even here the influence of a superior civilization, which, though cruel, refrained from the last rigour. The law of Egypt deprived the offender, not of her life, but of her beauty ; and by condemning her to lose her nose, made her, at the same time, a perpetual witness to her own degradation.

But the wise institutions which obtained for woman the place of honour in Egypt, and, as a consequence, secured that favoured land all the blessings of her refining influence, were gradually corrupted : the craft of the priest converted religion into an extravagant superstition ; and the evil nature of man, no longer restrained by religious scruples, consummated the national ruin. The practice of polygamy, in the form already described, lowered the dignity as well as vitiated the character of the sex, and woman oppressed became woman debased. It is impossible to turn over the pages of Herodotus, to read his account of the Bacchanalian procession, and the episode of King Rhampsinitus, without becoming painfully sensible of the low condition to which the women of

Egypt were ultimately reduced. Their treatment, indeed, grew every day worse, keeping pace with the decline and corruption of the nation, till, at last, we behold her enduring cruel punishments, which modern justice withholds from the vilest female criminals. At one time she is publicly beaten with a stick ; at another, loaded with overwhelming burdens, buried in a dungeon, or sent to work at the mines—not, as might be supposed, for any guilt of her own, but in expiation of the crime of a brother, a husband, or a father. Diodorus has drawn a touching picture of their sufferings at the mines.—“No attention,” he observes, “is paid to their persons ; they have not even a piece of rag to cover themselves ; and so wretched is their condition, that every one who witnesses it deplores the excessive misery they endure. They are allowed no rest or intermission from toil : neither the weakness of age nor woman’s infirmities are considered ; all are driven to their work with the lash, till at length, overcome by the insupportable weight of their afflictions, they die in the midst of their tasks : so that they long for death as far preferable to life.”

The beauty and personal graces of Egyptian women, celebrated alike by historians and by poets, were pre-eminent in the East from the days of Hagar, and, on two occasions, were an indirect cause of great national calamities. According to an old tradition, the charms of the Egyptian wife of Cyrus, by estranging him from Cassandane, the mother of his children, provoked the invasion of Cambyses. A Persian lady of rank attached to the court, having complimented Cassandane on the loveliness of her offspring, the Queen, with some bitterness, replied, “Though I am the mother of such children, Cyrus holds me in disdain, and honours her whom he has obtained from Egypt ;” on which Cambyses, then only ten years

of age, is reported to have said, "Therefore, mother, when I am a man, I will turn all Egypt upside down."

Another account attributes the invasion of the Persian conqueror to the influence of Nitatis, daughter of Apries, a deposed king of Egypt. Cambyses, on ascending the throne of Persia, sent to Amasis, who had recently usurped the Egyptian sceptre, to demand his daughter in marriage, a requisition with which the tyrant was unwilling to comply, as Cambyses being already married, his daughter, entitled by her rank to share a crown, would enter the Persian's family on an inferior footing. But dreading the resentment of Cambyses, he sent Nitatis—who, as the heir of Apries, ought to have succeeded to the throne—to the great King's court, representing her as his own child; and Cambyses would have been cajoled by the artifice, if the princess herself, anxious to be revenged on the destroyer of her family, had not undeceived him. "When the monarch," observes Herodotus, "saluted her, addressing her by her father's name, she said to him, 'O King! you do not perceive that you have been imposed upon by Amasis, who, having dressed me in rich attire, sent me to you, presenting me as his own daughter; whereas, in truth, I am the daughter of Apries, whom he, though he was his own master, put to death, after he had incited the Egyptians to revolt.'" Such a treacherous action, involving so gross an affront, greatly irritated Cambyses, and led to the sanguinary battle at the mouth of the Pelusian Nile, in which he completely vanquished Psammenitus, who had succeeded his father Amasis, and overthrew the ancient monarchy of Egypt.

A forcible illustration of the barbarity of those times is afforded by the cruel treatment inflicted on the daughter of Psammenitus, who, when the conqueror had captured Memphis, was dressed in the garb of a slave, and com-

pelled, with other maidens of rank, to carry a pitcher of water through the principal streets of the city, while her father and his court, seated on a high platform, were condemned to witness her humiliation, and listen to the lamentations of her afflicted companions. The fallen king is said to have borne this calamity, as well as the execution of his son, with a mournful dignity, which surprised and touched his conqueror; but when a venerable courtier, who had long been his friend, and had lost everything he possessed in his service, was led by in the rags of a beggar, he burst into tears, exclaiming to Cambyses, who demanded the reason of this sudden outburst, "Son of Cyrus, the calamities of my family are too great to be expressed by lamentation; but the griefs of my friend are worthy of tears; for he has fallen from abundance and prosperity into beggary and want"—a noble reply, which for a time induced the victor to spare the life of his captive, though it was afterwards forfeited to his jealousy and suspicion.

The beauty and blandishments of Cleopatra will remain a proverb to latest ages, and her mental acquirements attest, by their extent and variety, that the degraded condition to which woman had been reduced, in her moral and social relations, though it had destroyed her sense of virtue, had not impaired her natural capacity. Such was the learning of this princess, that, like our own Elizabeth, she could give audience to the ambassadors of seven different nations in their native tongues, and, in the midst of her vicious excesses, the love of literature maintained such an ascendancy over her, that, at a great cost, she enriched the library of Alexandria with the manuscript treasures of Pergamus. She made art the minister to her pleasures as well as the handmaid of taste; and luxury exhausted its devices to pander to

her caprice. A bark resplendent with gold bore her couch of down over the summer waves of the Nile ; precious odours perfumed the refreshing breeze, which swelled its silken sails, and the strokes of the rowers, as they glided through the stream, kept time to instruments of music. At her sumptuous banquets, she surpassed the prodigality of Lucullus, and in the goblets handed to her guests, melted pearls gave a doubtful flavour to the wine. Her irresistible charms, aided by the spell of her conversation, made a prey of Cæsar, who, after subjugating the world, suffered himself to be enslaved by a woman ; and Antony, maddened by her love, and ruined by her treachery, had his panting frame drawn up by a cord into a tower, that he might breathe his last at her feet. There, bidding a reluctant adieu to the pomps and vanities which had been the bane of her life—with her favourite maidens already lying dead at her side—the last monarch of Egypt, pressing a venomous asp to her bosom, perished by her own hand—a notable example of the mutability of human fortune.

IV.

THE HEBREWS.

THE history of the Jews is inextricably associated with that of Egypt—in the adventures of their ancestors, in their first migration, their settlement in Goshen, their long bondage, and their deliverance, and, subsequently, in their wars, their alliances, and their disasters. It might be expected, therefore, that they should be sensibly impressed with many of the customs of the ascendant

people, particularly in domestic life, and in the moral relations of woman ; but their usages, except in some trifling instances, were really wholly different, and, under the Mosaic code, the position of woman especially was peculiar and distinct.

But it was not only in reference to the law that the sex in Israel stood alone. The long-promised Deliverer of mankind was to be of the Jewish race, the offspring of a Jewish woman ; and as every one, from the children of the chief men to the humblest handmaid, might hope to be the mother of the mighty child, such an expectation exercised a permanent influence on the beauty, as well as on the character, feelings, and aspirations of the daughters of Israel. It is not among the existing descendants of Abraham that we are to look for the Hebrew type of antiquity ; for though it may still be detected in the Oriental Jew, the Israelites of the West retain, in their sinister features, no trace of their origin. Centuries of oppression, engendering an abject servility, and inveterate habits of sordid dealing, have completely changed their once handsome physiognomy ; and we look in vain for the Arab brow, the blue eye, the dazzling complexion, which, as history affirms, characterized the Esthers and Judiths of old, and which still meet the eye of the traveller in the deserted streets of Bethlehem. This beauty of the Jewish woman was, as already observed, heightened by her constant recollection of the destiny reserved for her—which was kept before her from her earliest years, introduced into the sacred canticles, and preached in the tabernacle, the synagogue, and the temple. The reflections thus inspired in her mind became a source of moral elevation, fruitful of every virtue, because they created and insured self-respect.

The laws relating to women were severe, but were

couched in a just, considerate, and protecting spirit. Enforcing a high standard of public virtue, and punishing with death the infringement of the marriage tie, they yet, as in Exodus xxi. 16, 17, showed compassion for human infirmity, while in Leviticus xix. 20, they threw a kindly mantle over the weakness of the bondwoman. The widow, left peculiarly defenceless in a pastoral community, was protected by the most stringent enactments, and God repeatedly proclaimed himself her guardian and avenger. "Thou shalt not afflict any widow," was the emphatic language of the statute, Exodus xxii. 22. "If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry. And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless." Nor is it accounted the least of the offences of the Israelites, whenever they fall away from the path of duty, that they persecuted and oppressed the widow, thus violating the law both of God and man.

The women of the tribe of Levi bore a part in the ministrations of religion, and the holy mantle of prophecy devolved on Miriam, Deborah, and other venerable matrons, the oracles and sibyls of the early world. Maidens of priestly extraction, especially trained for the purpose, officiated in the religious services of the tabernacle and temple, as musicians, dancers, and choristers. In the 15th chapter of Exodus, after the passage of the Red Sea, we are told that "Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously." Music and singing entered largely into the religious, as into the social and domestic, rejoicings of the Jews. For the first, the book of

Psalms, embracing such a variety of themes, and the numerous canticles of Holy Writ, afforded the priestesses a wide range of subjects ; and when a domestic festivity was celebrated, songs were composed expressly for the occasion. When David arranged the services of the Temple, the Levite women, including both the wives and daughters of priests, were formed into the seventh band of singers, and placed under the direction of She-miramoth ; and Ezra, on re-establishing public worship at Jerusalem, attached to the restored Temple a train of two hundred "singing-women."

The manner in which the musicians entered the sanctuary, in the solemn processions, is described in the Psalms : "The singers go before, the minstrels follow after, in the midst are the damsels playing the timbrels." Of the instruments of music, the harp, if we may judge from the precedence assigned to it, was the most usual and the most popular ; but the Scriptures enumerate also the nabel, psaltery, lute, dulcimer, and timbrels. Women are only mentioned as playing the timbrels and harp ; and the daughters of Sion, during their captivity at Babylon, are represented as hanging their "harps upon the willows." Probably the lute also was played by women.

The wives and daughters of priests, occupying a position calculated to attach great weight to their example, were required to be particularly blameless in their morals and conduct, and the law visited their derelictions with inexorable severity. For the crime overlooked in ordinary cases, the daughter of a priest was to be burnt alive, a punishment assigned by the Mosaic code to no other offender. A priest could not wed a divorced woman ; and the high-priest, holding the office of greatest sanctity, was prohibited from contracting a union with a widow.

The Israelites were forbidden to intermarry with other nations, as it was foreseen by God, and even foretold, that if they formed such alliances, they would be seduced by their wives into the idolatrous usages prevalent in surrounding countries. Moses himself was reproached by Miriam (Numbers xii. 1) "because of the Ethiopian woman he had married," and who was no doubt the Princess Tharbis mentioned by Josephus; and Balaam, after finding his sacrifices and enchantments in the camp of Moab had no effect, counselled Balak to decoy the Israelites to their ruin through the Midianitish damsels: so early did man convert woman into an instrument of evil, though he remained insensible of her far greater influence, under proper tuition, for good.

The great hardship of the Mosaic statutes, as they affected woman, was the facility afforded to divorce, which Divine authority, while ignoring the practice, declared to be intended as a punishment—"because of the hardness of your hearts;" and if all its effects are maturely considered, no one will doubt that it worked out its own retribution, contributing not a little, as time rolled on, to the eventual degeneracy of the race. Such being the result naturally to be expected, it may be asked why Moses sanctioned so unjust and so pernicious a statute; but if this were a suitable place to discuss the subject, reasons might be advanced why mankind should be taught, in the history of a chosen nation, that every blessing which Providence can bestow, whether of territory, government, or religion, will fail to preserve a people unmindful of the rights of nature, and who, in the outraged name of law, trample on the weakness of woman.

Marriages are contracted in the East at a very early age, and the Jewish maidens, like those of the neighbouring nations, were often betrothed in their twelfth year. Up to

that time, they received the name of *Alma, virgin* or *shut up*, in reference to the strict seclusion in which they lived; and their tender years are denoted in the phrase "spouse of one's youth." At the betrothal, the amount of the dowry, a settlement made on the bride by the bridegroom, was agreed upon, and the conditions of the union were often committed to writing. The bridegroom also presented the bride with a piece of silver, exclaiming, "Receive this piece of silver as a pledge that you shall become my spouse." For a spinster, the marriage ceremonies, as in the time of the Patriarchs, extended over seven days, but in the case of a widow, they were limited to three. The wedding of Samson (Judges xiv.), and that of Tobias (Tobit vii.), with the Canticle of Solomon, and, lastly, the Parables of our Lord, illustrate most fully the form and character of the nuptial festivities. In the Canticle of Solomon, celebrating the monarch's espousals with the daughter of Pharaoh, the proceedings of each day are minutely related, and the varied emotions of the lovers described. It was not till the third morning, we learn from this epithalamium, that the impatient bridegroom was permitted to see the face of his mistress, and then she coquettishly drops her veil, as if unconsciously, to allow him a glimpse of her features. This was the most eventful incident in the life of an Eastern woman; for, whatever her charms, she could not be certain, while they remained concealed, that she should secure the admiration or the love of her husband, and hence would either have before her the cruel prospect of divorce, or at the last moment, when her engagement and betrothal had become public, might be exposed to the insult of rejection. The royal poet has delicately touched on the misgivings of his bride at this interesting moment, when, in her modest estimate of her attractions, she doubted the effect

of her dark complexion. "Look not upon me," she exclaims: "because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me, my mother's children were angry with me: they made me keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyards have I not kept."

On the evening of the seventh day, the bride was escorted from the residence of her father to her future home by a grand procession, composed of the bridegroom and his friends, who, as they proceeded, uttered exclamations of joy, proclaiming the approach of their favoured companion; and on nearing the dwelling, the train was met by the maiden friends of the bride, carrying lanterns, and joining in the festal shout. They all entered the house together, when the door was closed: and each individual, throwing over his shoulder a kerchief or scarf—a *wedding garment*—followed the bridal pair to the banquet, which was presided over by the most intimate friend of the bridegroom, the governor of the feast. Riddles were then proposed, as at the nuptials of Samson; and the bridegroom, as on that occasion, presented ornaments and trinkets to their successful expounders.

These customs, which prevailed from time immemorial among the Jews, were followed by most of the Oriental nations, and, indeed, are still practised in many parts of the East. Ward, in his "View of the History of the Hindoos," gives the following corresponding account of a Hindoo marriage:—"The bridegroom came from a distance, and the bride lived at Serampore, to which place the bridegroom was to come by water. After waiting two or three hours, at length near midnight it was announced, as if in the very words of Scripture, 'Behold, the bridegroom cometh: go ye out to meet him.' All the persons employed now lighted their lamps, and ran with them in their hands to fill up their stations in the pro-

cession : some of them had lost their lights, and were unprepared ; but it was then too late to seek them, and the cavalcade moved forward to the house of the bride The bridegroom was carried in the arms of a friend and placed in a superb seat in the midst of the company, where he sat a short time, and then went into the house, the door of which was immediately shut, and guarded by Sepoys. I and others expostulated with the doorkeepers, but in vain. Never was I so struck with our Lord's beautiful parable as at this moment : the door was shut !”

On the death of her husband, the Jewish woman, if left childless, offered herself in marriage to his eldest brother, or to his next of kin ; and if the successive relatives of the deceased declined the overture, she retained her husband's estate. An instance of this custom, and the ceremonies attending it, is recorded in the 4th chapter of Ruth, and affords a curious glimpse of the moral perceptions of the day.

The bridal dress of a Princess, or Jewish lady of rank, whose parents possessed sufficient means, was of the most sumptuous description, as may be seen from the account given of that worn by the bride of Solomon, in the Canticles ; and the various articles enumerated show the additions which feminine taste had already made to the toilet. The body was now clothed in a bodice, ascending to the net-work which inclosed, rather than concealed, the swelling bust ; and jewelled clasps and ear-rings, with strings of pearls and chains of gold, gave a dazzling effect to Oriental beauty. In Solomon's reign, silk is said to have been added to the resources of the toilet ; and the sex owe to a sister—Pamphyla, the daughter of Patous—the discovery of this exquisite material, in which woman wrested from nature a dress worthy of her charms.

The ordinary attire of Jewish women was made of linen, usually white, without any intermixture of colours, though, in accordance with the injunction in Numbers xv. 38, they made "fringes in the border of their garments," and "put upon the fringe of the borders a riband of blue." Judith, when she sought to captivate Holofernes, "put on her garments of gladness, wherewith she was clad during the life of Manasses her husband: and she took sandals upon her feet, and put about her her bracelets and her chains, and her rings and her ear-rings, and all her ornaments, and decked herself bravely to allure the eyes of all men that should see her." Gemmed bangles encircled her ankles, attracting the glance to her delicate white feet; and Holofernes, by an Oriental figure of speech, is said to have been "ravished by the beauty of her sandals." Like the belles of Egypt, she did not disdain, in setting off her charms, to have recourse to perfumes and cosmetics, and, previously to setting out, she "anointed herself with precious ointment." In another place, Jezebel is said to "paint her eyelids," and Solomon, in the Proverbs, in describing the deceitful woman, adjures his son not to be "taken with her eyelids;" evidently alluding to the use of collyrium. The Jewish beauty owed no slight obligation to her luxuriant tresses, which were decorated with waving plumes and strings of pearls; and in allusion to this custom, followed among the tribes from time immemorial, St. Paul affirms that "a woman's ornament is her hair." Judith "braided the hair of her head, and put a tire upon it;" and the head-dress of Pharaoh's daughter, in the Canticles, is compared by Solomon to Carmel. No mention is made of Judith's mirror, but it was undoubtedly made of brass, like those described in Exodus xxxviii. 8, as "the looking-glasses of the women which assembled at the door of the congregation."

The garments of a widow, as of mourners generally, were made of sackcloth ; and Judith wore also "a shirt of hair." The term of mourning depended on the feelings of the bereaved woman, or, perhaps, in some measure, on her means, and the widow of Manasses mourned his death "three years and four months." Nor was this grief a mere form ; for "she fasted all the days of her widowhood, save the eves of the sabbaths, and the sabbaths, and the eves of the new moons, and the new moons, and the feasts and solemn days of the house of Israel." As in Egypt, and indeed most Eastern countries, women attended the family of a deceased Jew as hired mourners, and after the funeral, his female relatives frequently resorted to the grave to shed their tears over his last resting-place. Thus Mary repaired to the sepulchre of Lazarus, while Martha, confining herself to the house, received the condolence of her friends ; and, on a more memorable occasion, Mary Magdalen and other women attended at the grave of the Redeemer.

The employments of women varied with their station, and, among the higher classes, needlework and embroidery, bestowed profusely on their own apparel, were favourite occupations. The mother of Samuel made him a coat, which she took with her every year to Jerusalem ; and, in later times, Dorcas prepared clothes for the poor. Spinning was also considered a feminine employment ; and Moses records (Exodus xxxv.) that "all the women who were wise-hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine linen. And all the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom spun goats' hair." The virtuous matron in the Proverbs, though mistress of a large household, and having servants "clothed in scarlet," is represented as seeking "wool and

flax, and working willingly with her hands. . . . She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She considereth a field, and buyeth it : with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. . . . She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hand holdeth the distaff. . . . She maketh herself coverings of tapestry : her clothing is silk and purple. . . . She maketh fine linen and selleth it, and delivereth girdles unto the merchant." That it was customary for women to sell the produce of their spindles we learnal so from Tobit, who, during the period of his distress, was supported by the labours of his wife. "And my wife Anna," says the suffering prophet, "did take women's work to do. And when she sent them home to their owners, they paid her wages, and gave her also besides a kid." Another occupation of the Jewish housewife was grinding corn, which is referred to in the memorable prophecy of our Saviour—"Two women shall be grinding at a mill : the one shall be taken, and the other left." And in rural districts, carrying water, as in the days of the Patriarchs, continued, and still continues, to be one of the principal duties of the female members of the Jewish household ; and is brought forcibly before us in the case of the woman of Samaria.

Of the accomplishments of Hebrew women, dancing, next to music, was the most popular, and perhaps the most usual. The charming art was cultivated by both sexes, and by ladies of rank as well as by the poor ; and the Princess Salome, the daughter of Herodias, who claimed the cruel guerdon of John the Baptist's head, was the Taglioni of her time. Dancing was associated by the Jews with the holy festivals, and introduced into the public rejoicings ; thus, in the passage in Exodus already quoted, describing the exultation of the Israelites

at their escape from Pharaoh, it is said that Miriam and the other women danced to the music of timbrels ; the ill-fated daughter of Jephthah went to meet the returning hero "with timbrels and with dances ;" and, lastly, Judith, on the success of her project for destroying the Assyrians, was received with similar honours. "All the women of Israel," we are told, "made a dance among them for her, and she took branches in her hand, and gave also to the women that were with her. And they put a garland of olive upon her head, and upon her maid that was with her, and she went before all the people in the dance."

The part assigned to woman in the Jewish commonwealth was a most important one, extending from the sacred offices of religion to the most menial employments ; and their character and intellect rendered them equal to any position. In the domestic virtues they were excelled by none ; and Michal shielding David from the anger of her father, Abigail interceding with him for her morose husband, Hannah making a coat for her little son, and the two sisters mourning for Lazarus, with other Scriptural incidents, afford us touching examples of their tenderness and goodness. In times of public danger, their patriotism and love of country were equally conspicuous ; and who can read the pathetic lamentation of the daughters of Zion, as they sat on the distant banks of the Euphrates, without emotion ? Nor were they wanting in bolder qualities, and on no less than four occasions women were the deliverers of Israel. The names of Jael, Deborah, Esther, and Judith, revered in their own day, claim the respect and veneration of all posterity.

Yet it was in this land that, by the evasion and the abuse of the laws, woman was held in rigorous, if not cruel subjection, and her very name made a term of

reproach. Even in those cases where her heroic devotion saved the commonwealth, it was disdainfully said that Israel was "delivered by the hands of a woman," as if this fact, instead of being a disgrace to the Hebrews themselves, added to the humiliation of the enemy. Marriage soon became a mere form, and at length was degraded into a bargain. What can we say to such a contract as that described in the third chapter of Hosea, which is stigmatized, in the most opprobrious terms, as a prevailing usage of the time? Yet this demoralization of woman was not only tolerated, but sanctioned, by the corrupt and misguided authorities, who, deaf alike to the remonstrances of Heaven and the voice of nature, could not be persuaded that they were, by this complicity, fostering the germ of national decay.

The marriage tie could not only be severed at the will of the husband, but a parent was at liberty, if the connexion became distasteful to him, to reclaim his married daughter, and even to give her to another consort. Several instances of this custom are on record; and the case of Michal, the daughter of Saul, whom the King took away from David, and gave to the more courtly Adriel, will suggest itself to the feeblest memory. The practice was a vestige of the ancient Canaanitish code, which was still recognised among that race, from whom it was borrowed, with other barbarous usages, by their conquerors. Thus the Timnite father-in-law of Samson disposed of his daughter to one of his own countrymen, after the Jewish hero, having celebrated the wedding festivities, had been received as her husband, though in this instance both father and daughter incurred a cruel retribution.

The history of Herod affords us a sad picture of the helpless condition of woman in the families of the Jewish

kings. Alexandra, daughter of Hyrcanus, and widow of Alexander, of the august house of Aristobulus, herself a princess of extraordinary beauty and capacity, was the mother of two lovely children, a son and daughter, who, next to Hyrcanus, were the lawful heirs of the Hebrew crown. The sceptre of Israel, however, had been seized by Herod, whose usurpation was legalized by the unscrupulous cupidity of Marc Antony, the ruling authority in the East; and the venerable Hyrcanus and his grandchildren were left to the mercy of the usurper, who had waded to the throne through blood. But woman, with all her weakness, possesses a mightier power than armies, to which the proudest conquerors must succumb; and the infamous Herod, who stopped at no crime and no obstacle, was subdued by the soft eyes and dazzling brow of Alexandra's daughter, the peerless Mariamne. The enslaver of her country became a suitor at the feet of this defenceless maiden, and—for, in a woman's eye, valour covers a multitude of defects—won her favour, her hand, and her love.

The marriage was solemnized at Samaria, whence the royal pair proceeded to Jerusalem; and here, at the earnest request of Mariamne, and as a gratification to the Jews, the monarch conferred the sacred dignity of High-Priest on the youthful brother of his bride, the Prince Aristobulus, who, on account of his descent from their fallen kings and his rare personal attractions, was regarded with secret hope and pride by the Hebrew nation.

It was at the feast of the Tabernacles that the young pontiff first officiated in the temple, in the presence of the King and court, and of worshippers from every part of Israel. The scene and the occasion were equally adapted to awaken the national instincts of the Jews, and to deepen their sympathy for the last representative

of their ancient monarchs. Between the cherubim of the altar were spread, in costly array, those hallowed vessels of gold and silver which had caused such a terrible interruption at Belshazzar's feast ; and flowers of every hue were hung in festoons round the gilded columns, or strewn over the tessellated pavement, mingling their perfumes with the sanctified odours of the censer. Through arch and aisle came the swelling chorus of five hundred voices, in which the soft full tones of woman were predominant, while harp, lute, and timbrels added their notes to the thrilling concert. The ceiling of azure and gold, reflecting the dazzling sun-light, looked like a canopy of glory overhead ; while Herod and his men of war, in their panoply of steel ; the fair daughters of Israel, with their charms scarcely shaded by the dim veil, yet all yielding in beauty to the queenly Mariamne ; the gorgeously-clad courtiers, the venerable sages of the Sanhedrim, the throng of priests and holy women, in vestments of spotless white, and the motley crowd of worshippers, combined to produce an imposing effect below. Aristobulus, arrayed in the magnificent costume of his office, stood in front of the altar ; and wearing on his breast the oracle consecrated by Moses, and on his head the mitre of Aaron, his tall form and seraphic countenance enraptured the people, who gave utterance to their feelings in a manner that could not but displease, as well as alarm the usurper. From that moment the Prince's doom was sealed, though Herod, shrinking from open violence, resolved to make it appear the result of accident. Towards the close of a sultry day, Aristobulus was decoyed to the banks of the Jordan, whose cool waters, overshadowed by the graceful sycamore, offered the tempting luxury of a bath ; and his murderous attendants sprang into the stream, urging the Prince to follow. Too readily he

yielded to their solicitations ; and plunging beneath the waves, was forcibly kept down by the others, and brought to the shore a corpse.

All Herod's subtlety could not blind Alexandra to the real character of this cruel murder. When the lifeless body of her son was borne into the palace, she threw herself on his bier, imprinted passionate kisses on his still beautiful face, and gave utterance to her sorrow in vehement ejaculations. With dishevelled hair and wild outcries, she rushed into the presence of the tyrant, and demanded the apprehension and punishment of his ruthless myrmidons. The scowl on Herod's brow, more than the honeyed words from his lips, subdued and pacified her ; and, after the first ebullition of grief, fears for her personal safety induced her to remain silent till she could obtain some opportunity of revenge. But it is seldom given to the feeble to overcome and punish the strong, and Alexandra's nature was wanting in that decision which alone could insure her success. Dissimulation, if pardonable in particular exigencies, is not the quality of a great mind, and rarely accompanies great actions ; but it was the ruling sentiment of this unfortunate princess, and characterized all her proceedings.

Cypros and Salome, the mother and sister of Herod, had from the first regarded the family of his wife with distrust and aversion, and subsequent events tended to embitter these feelings. With the proud confidence of beauty and genius, Mariamne treated their enmity with disdain, and, herself descended from the ancient Asmonæan race, scoffed at their ignoble and vulgar origin. But the vacillation and imprudence of Alexandra, though she never ventured on such affronts, exposed her to the malice of these vindictive women, and more than once, their vigilance detected her in a clandestine correspondence

with Cleopatra, at that time the enemy of Herod, and the mistress of the all-powerful Antony. It was the influence of Mariamne that preserved her mother from the consequence of these discoveries ; but, although she escaped unpunished, the effect, when combined with other circumstances, was to diminish the ascendancy of the Queen, and to strengthen the hands of her enemies. Herod's ear was now opened to the whispers of suspicion, and the more malignant suggestions of slander ; and he began to look on his wife, whom he had hitherto considered spotless, with the distempered eye of jealousy. In his mad love he could not endure the thought that she should even survive him, lest her hand should be given to another ; and being summoned to Egypt by Antony, he directed his brother Joseph to put her to death, if, as there was some reason to fear, the Roman despot should adjudge his own head to the block. Herod's triumphant return prevented the execution of the sanguinary order ; but, in the mean time, Joseph had revealed it to Mariamne, and this indiscretion cost him his life.

Though an estrangement between the royal pair resulted from this incident—an estrangement which Cypros and Salome exhausted their arts to confirm, and which the abortive intrigues of Alexandra contributed to prolong—so irresistible was the spell of Mariamne's beauty, that the King, after a faint struggle, again submitted to her ascendancy ; but the same burning jealousy remained in his breast, blighting the happiness of the present and reviving his apprehensions of the future ; and these, aggravated by the evil suggestions of his mother and sister, worked him up to an ungovernable pitch, when, quitting Judæa a second time, he proceeded to offer his homage to the victorious Augustus, after the memorable battle of Actium. Haunted by his former misgivings, he once more secretly

gave orders that Mariamne should be put to death if a similar fate befell himself ; and once more his orders were divulged.

Herod returned, as before, successful ; and his first act was to fly to the presence of the Queen, and dazzle her with his triumph. The friend of Augustus, confirmed in the regal inheritance of David, a warrior and a hero, he came, flushed with pride, to command rather than to sue, little expecting a repulse from woman's lips. But Mariamne, armed in the power of her beauty, felt no dread of his resentment : sensible of his inherent turpitude, she scorned his gems and purple. The eyes which had once looked upon him in love, kindling his black soul with their melting glances, now met him with undisguised aversion, while, in answer to his protestations of affection, she unmasked and denounced his perfidy. The King, already the prey of suspicions, was maddened by this discovery, believing it could only have been made by a favoured lover ; and, tearing his hair and smiting his breast, he threatened to execute both the Queen and her informant. His menaces had no effect on Mariamne, who, disdaining to control her anger, replied in a tone of defiance, bidding him, as he had already killed her father and her brother, to add this fresh murder to the catalogue of his crimes ; and finally drove him from her presence by her taunts and reproaches.

Such was the critical moment chosen by Salome for accusing the Queen, by the mouth of her tire-woman, of an attempt to poison her incensed husband, who, blinded alike by jealousy and passion, eagerly credited the charge. A council was summoned ; the formality of an examination gone through ; and the innocent Mariamne, without being permitted to answer her accuser, was condemned to the block.

On her way to the scaffold a new indignity awaited the Queen. The miserable Alexandra, fearing that the next victim of Herod's cruelty might be herself, and hoping to avert his wrath, appeared at a window of the palace, and regardless of the dignity of her station, and the tender claims of nature, publicly upbraided her daughter for her ingratitude to so indulgent a husband, the generous protector of her family, the spouse of her youth, and the father of her children. Even the obdurate hearts of the soldiers were moved to indignation by this unnatural act; but their murmurs were silenced by Mariamne, who, while she bore her own wrongs with majestic dignity, wept over the sorrows and unhappy fate of her mother, protesting her own innocence with her last breath.

This is but a solitary example of the injustice inflicted on women even of the highest rank, on the soil of Palestine; but were we to descend into the humbler grades, a picture might be drawn of her sufferings, her degradation, and her bondage, at which humanity would shudder. From the same spot, however, a new dispensation was now preached; the sentence pronounced on Eve was rescinded; and the long slavery of the sex was finally terminated by the advent of the Redeemer.

V.

ASSYRIA—NINEVEH AND BABYLON.

To whatever age we may assign the foundation of the monarchy of Egypt, that of Assyria, its contemporary and rival in power, was at least as ancient, if not of anterior date. It is almost universally attributed to Nimrod, that mighty hunter before the Lord, whose name became a proverb in the mouths of men, and who was the first rudiment of hero-worship. Under the primitive appellation of Bar-chus (son of Cush), easily corrupted into Bacchus, he was included among the deities of the heathen mythology : history preserves his identity in the more striking designation of Ninus ; and the ingenuity of modern times, which stops at no difficulty, has recognised him in the Asshur of Genesis. Tradition, in such cases a credible witness, points him out with equal precision as the builder of Nineveh and Babylon.

Of Nineveh, the people we are accustomed to call the ancients, and who are the founders of history, knew nothing. Homer makes a brief allusion to Assyria, when he includes Memnon, then an Assyrian captain, among the auxiliaries of Troy ; but Nineveh had absolutely perished before Greece emerged from barbarism. It is to the sacred pages of the Bible that we must turn for information respecting the first of cities ; and so completely were the denunciations pronounced against it by the Jewish prophets fulfilled, that it might almost have been supposed, from the silence of all other annals, that such a place had never existed. Destiny reserved it for the present age, and for the genius of an Englishman, to

disinter the mighty ruin, and thus to confirm by its fragments the unerring verity of Holy Writ.

As men began to multiply on the earth, Nimrod, fourth in descent from Noah, whose life of nine centuries had not yet terminated, acquired his great pre-eminence and renown, signalizing his courage by seeking wild beasts in pathless solitudes, never before entered by man. His intrepidity, his possessions, and his illustrious extraction, with a natural disposition for command, soon marked him out as a protector to the feeble, a leader to the adventurous, and a chief to the servile and ignorant ; or, relying on his own might, he most likely seized the authority few were inclined to dispute. To this step, indeed, he may have been, and probably was, instigated by a woman—for we may believe that the wife of Nimrod was SEMIRAMIS.

The father of monarchs established the seat of his power at Nineveh,—described by Jonah, who visited it under the Kings of the second dynasty, as “an exceeding great city of three days’ journey,” which, estimated by the Jewish standard, has been set down as including a circumference of sixty miles. It was surrounded by walls of a hundred feet in height, and of proportionate breadth, so that, according to Diodorus, three chariots could be driven abreast on the ramparts. Below, round the whole front of this inclosure, yawned a deep ditch, which had furnished the materials of the builders—sunburnt bricks, composed of the excavated clay ; and at every angle rose battlemented towers, in which alert sentinels kept watch and ward. The population, in the zenith of Assyrian greatness, has been estimated at 600,000, on the supposition that the declaration of the Almighty to Jonah, that the city contained six score thousand persons who knew not their right hand from

their left,^b referred to children ; but it appears more reasonable to conclude, from the context, that it was used to denote the number of ignorant adults, whose benighted condition, rendering them incapable of distinguishing good from evil, claimed forbearance from the God of mercy. Viewed in this sense—regarding the six score thousand as applied to the scum of the people—the population must be reckoned as at least a million, which accords more with the extent of the city, and the power and greatness of its kings.

Babylon was a twin sister of this venerable capital. Its circumference, measured by Herodotus, was the same, covering an area of sixty miles. The walls, three in number, one within the other, were of corresponding dimensions, and appear to have been surrounded by a brazen parapet ; while gates of brass, flanked by huge towers, defended all the entrances. Like Nineveh, it was erected on a plain ; and as the elder city crowned the banks of the Tigris, so the rushing waters of the Euphrates flowed through the other. The river indeed, besides supplying the aqueducts and conduits of the city, poured a copious stream into innumerable artificial channels, which, by aiding the bountiful hand of nature, ministered to the requirements and the luxury of the inhabitants. The far-famed “ waters of Babylon ” meandered through the garden of willows, where the disconsolate daughters of Zion hung their harps on the trees, and irrigated the fields and parks, inclosed, with more than one royal chase, by the embattled walls. On the banks of these tranquil streams, the nobles and wealthy merchants took refuge from the heats of summer ; and the numerous islets in the mid-channel were dotted with pavilions, where the Izaak Waltons of primeval days pursued their pensive sport. One of

these retreats has been recovered by Mr. Layard, who, in his first account of Assyria, has preserved a drawing of it ; and it is remarkable that this minor relic shows, by the presence of columns, a greater advance in architecture than the ruins of the royal palace.

The houses of Nineveh and Babylon were built of sun-burnt brick, but the interiors, after being coated over with plaster, were decorated with paintings, or panelled with alabaster ; and the palaces and temples, which afforded more room for the display of art, were adorned with elaborate sculptures, representing historical, allegorical, and religious subjects. As no trace of windows has been discovered, Mr. Layard conjectures that, in regal edifices, light was admitted at the roof, but that veritable windows were constructed in ordinary dwellings ; and, in fact, this is attested by the statement in Daniel—"Now when Daniel knew the writing was signed, he went into his house, and his *window being open* in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed." Through this window, when the shutters were unclosed, he was seen by his enemies, which proves that it could not have been a skylight ; and the probability, is that it was but a few feet from the ground. The Assyrians were acquainted with glass, but seem to have had but a dim perception of its uses, as its beautiful quality of transmitting light, which renders it so important a material in modern dwellings, appears to have been unknown to them.

The prophet Ezekiel, who was in captivity on the banks of the Chebar, in the upper part of Mesopotamia, describes the decorations of an Assyrian palace with great minuteness and fidelity. They included—and Layard's marvellous discoveries rise from their grave of three thousand years to establish the fact—"men

portrayed on the wall, the images of the Chaldeans portrayed with vermillion: girded with girdles upon their loins, exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads, all of them princes to look to, after the manner of the Babylonians of Chaldea, the land of their nativity." A carpet covered the floor; chairs, cushioned with down, but not yet furnished with the luxurious support of a back, were ranged around; and a basket of flowers in the spacious doorway filled the room with an agreeable and welcome odour.

Such, even in remote times, was the opulence of those cities which owed their earliest development to Semiramis. But that mighty Queen, as the first sovereign of her sex, is entitled to a more particular notice of her works, and of her great exploits, in these pages.

The origin of Semiramis is enveloped in one of those fables which throw a doubt over the annals of antiquity, and, while they claim for their hero a descent from the gods, most probably veil an obscure, if not a dishonourable parentage. In her infancy she is said to have been nurtured by doves, till, by a fortunate accident, she was discovered by Sisona, the shepherd of the King of Assyria, and by him brought up as his own child. This weak invention can hardly disguise from posterity that Sisona was actually her father, though she thought it more becoming her subsequent regal fortunes to account for their connexion in another way.

Semiramis had perhaps reached her thirteenth year,—a marriageable age in the East, when Menon, a great officer of the court, was sent from Nineveh to inspect the King's flocks, and for this purpose presented himself at the house of Sisona. The young damsel took care to throw herself in his way; and if he was instantly smitten by her beauty, he was dazzled, on addressing her, by the

witchery of her demeanour, which, as all writers agree, invested her with more than human attractions. Her manners, indeed, were even more fascinating than her personal loveliness, surrounding her with an atmosphere of grace, particularly captivating to an eastern imagination. After her elevation to a throne, it was sufficient for her to show herself at a window of the palace, to still the raging waves of popular tumult ; and Valerius Maximus relates that on one occasion, being summoned from her toilet to quell an insurrection, she rode half-dressed through the streets of Babylon, and presenting herself to the people, every one eagerly returned to his allegiance, and the revolt was quelled. To commemorate this incident, the Babylonians erected a brazen statue of Semiramis, representing her in the act of confronting the populace, with her hair streaming loose over her shoulders, and her bust exposed, as she actually appeared at the time.

Menon, the courtier, after inspecting the vast flocks of the king, still lingered in the hut of Sisona, enchained by the syren accents of his daughter ; but at length, discovering that he could never endure a separation, he persuaded Semiramis to become his wife, and accompany him back to Nineveh. There he immured her in his palace, more as a captive than a bride, fearing that her beauty might make too deep an impression on the susceptible heart of the King ; but her vigorous intellect, aided by the influence of her charms, soon acquired such an ascendancy over him, that all restraint on her actions was removed. The magnificence of her lordly abode, indeed, could as little content her ambition as the mud hovel of her father, and she waited impatiently for an occasion of signalizing herself in the eyes of the world, by some great, heroic, and unparalleled achievement. When

the Assyrians invaded Media, she insisted on accompanying Menon in the train of the King ; but, to lull his misgivings, remained perfectly secluded till the army, after an uninterrupted series of successes, was arrested by the massive walls of Bactra, which were defended with such obstinacy, that the whole expedition was threatened with ruin. Then this daring woman presented herself before the council, at which her amazed husband was conferring with the King, and suggested, as the walls of the town were impregnable, that an assault should be made on the citadel. She indicated the best mode of carrying out the design ; and while she admitted that it involved great hazard, claimed the honour of leading the troops to the attack—a post which the King, though unwilling to expose her to so much peril, could not but concede to so lovely a warrior, and for which, indeed, few of the bewildered council were inclined to contend.

The whole army mustered to see the beautiful wife of Menon place herself at the head of this forlorn hope, every man of which, we may well believe, was fired by the example of such a leader, advancing amidst the clash of timbrels and the waving of banners, towards the trenches of the enemy. For a few moments the issue was doubtful. A cloud of arrows, and a dense shower of missiles, hurled from the lofty battlements, broke the ranks of the assailants, and perhaps damped their ardour ; but Semiramis, undismayed by danger, still pushed on, and none could refuse to follow where a woman led. The scaling-ladders were raised against the walls ; the intrepid Amazon was the first to gain their summit, and, while the hosts of Assyria still looked wondering on, the golden standard of Ninus was planted on the roof of the citadel.

Accustomed to gratify every wish and every passion,

and possessing absolute and irresponsible power, the Assyrian monarch could ill brook that such a woman should remain the wife of a subject ; and, as soon as he entered the captured city, he demanded from Menon the surrender of Semiramis. The sacrifice was more than the unhappy husband could be prevailed upon to make, and he ventured to oppose the royal will. At the Assyrian court, opposition was treason ; and vengeance, unrestrained by law, quickly overtook the disobedient. The next day Menon was cast into a dungeon, and, to reconcile him to the loss of his wife, Ninus deprived him of his eyes, on which the wretched man gave himself up to despair, and put an end to his existence.

Semiramis now shared the imperial throne of Assyria, to which, fortunate in every relation of life, she soon brought an heir, the father of a line of kings. But this aspiring woman looked with contempt on the half of a diadem, though the partner of her power was content to be her slave. In a moment of confidence, Ninus was persuaded to decree that for five days she should possess supreme authority, and having assigned the offices of trust to men devoted to her interests, her first act, on assuming the regal functions, was to strike off the head of her besotted husband, when she became the sole occupant of the throne, and no longer placed a bound to her ambition.

Never since has woman been placed in a situation so eminently adapted for regenerating and permanently influencing the morals of mankind, as well as asserting the natural rights of her sex. It would almost appear that, while the curse of Eden was in full operation, Heaven had mercifully intrusted to herself the task of effecting her own redemption, and of throwing off the iron yoke which had been cast upon her. The time—for the new

world was yet in its infancy—the means, and the instrument, a woman of matchless beauty, genius, and resolution, a queen, and a heroine, seem to be all especially suited for this great purpose. But Divine Intelligence had foreseen, from the beginning of time, that human depravity was incapable of elevating itself from its depths, let circumstances be ever so propitious; and none but a celestial reformer could restore the equality of the sexes. The evil passions of man had so long been in the ascendant, that they had infected and corrupted woman, and nature was poisoned at its source. It is impossible to look back at the cruelties, the barbarities, and the revolting crimes perpetrated in those days—at the utter subversion of right by might, the spoliation and oppression of the weak by the strong, and the perverted sentiments which animated the mass of mankind, without a mingled feeling of wonder and indignation. Nor would it be difficult to prove that this universal barbarism was the result and natural consequence of the long subjugation of the weaker sex, the gentle influence of which is a necessary element of civilization, and cannot be ignored without ruin to man.

Semiramis, endowed with every faculty for achieving greatness, which she regarded as the first object of life, expended her efforts in undertakings flattering only to her own vanity. Taking her tone from the complexion of the times, she pursued the shadow of a false glory, instead of seeking, by her example and laws, to reform and elevate her sex and species. The injustice and wicked license of man were thus visited with signal retribution; and a woman, who should naturally have been a dispenser of peace, rose up as a tyrant and oppressor.

Still posterity is dazzled by the achievements and genius of this great queen. In the midst of a guilty and

foul life, she carried out her purposes with unremitting determination and unwearied diligence. The hanging gardens of Babylon, long one of the wonders of the world, were a splendid monument of her taste, if they were also a memorial of her extravagance. A wall twenty-two feet in thickness inclosed this magnificent pleasure-ground, which rose in successive terraces, supported by arches of gigantic height, to the level of the walls of the city, each terrace having a sufficient depth of mould to afford root to the largest trees; while plants and flowers, all of the rarest kind, grew in rich profusion, displaying the varied hues of Eastern vegetation. The uppermost terrace contained a reservoir of water, which, by means of an ingenious mechanical contrivance, drew its supplies from the Euphrates; and hence refreshing streams were conveyed, through meandering channels, to every part of the garden. Commanding spots were crowned with elegant pavilions, embracing a view of different quarters of the vast city, and the boundless plain beyond.

In the midst of her capital, on the brink of the deep and rapid river, Semiramis erected two palaces, one of which extended for nearly eight miles along the bank; while the other, on the opposite shore, occupied three and three-quarters. The two buildings were connected above by a bridge, spanning the broad Euphrates; and below, a tunnel, the work of a patriarchal Brunel, afforded a covert passage through the bed of the river. Among the countless apartments of the larger edifice, were three rooms of brass, which, like the mystic chamber of Bluebeard, were hermetically closed to ordinary eyes, and could only be opened by a spring, known to none but the Queen and her confidantes. The other apartments were furnished in the most sumptuous manner, and profusely decorated with sculptures and paintings, in some of which, to perpetuate

the character of her recreations, the intrepid Queen was depicted with her husband at a lion-hunt, transfixing the king of the forest with a spear.

Another of the works of Semiramis was the temple of Belus, a structure so colossal, that it has been set down by Bochart as the veritable tower of Babel. If we may rely on the account of Strabo, eight towers, each six hundred feet high, rose consecutively, one over the other, from the centre of the building, which thus obtained the incredible altitude of a mile; and on the summit of this architectural Alps was an observatory, surmounted by three statues of gold, representing Jupiter, Juno, and Rhea. The figure of the fabled Thunderer, who stood erect, a marvel of primeval art, was forty feet high, and those of the goddesses were of corresponding dimensions, and equal beauty. In front of the images was a huge table of gold; and two goblets of the same metal, receiving the copious dews of heaven, offered an appropriate draught to the inanimate deities. Six thousand three hundred Babylonian talents were expended on the shrine—a sum equivalent to considerably more than two millions of our money, and constituting a prodigious amount in those early times.

Semiramis adorned the centre of her capital with an obelisk, hewn in a mass from the mountains of Armenia, and conveyed by men and asses to the river, down which it was floated on a vast and massive raft, supported by inflated skins, to its appointed site. This column of solid rock rose to the height of a hundred and thirty feet, tapering from a square of five feet in breadth, and could be seen at a great distance on the plain, over the lofty walls of the city.

But the genius of Semiramis could not find sufficient scope for its conceptions in the limited circuit of Babylon,

and, far and near, she paraded her arms and her taste before the astonished world. Marching into Media, she encamped her vast host at the foot of a mountain, rising from the sandy plain of Bughistan ; and here, in mere caprice, turned the arid desert into a beautiful garden, placing in the midst of it a colossal statue of herself, surrounded by a hundred of her guards. From this Versailles she ascended to the inaccessible heights above, on the packs and burdens of her soldiers and of the animals attached to the army, delighted to appear where no foot had ever trod but her own.

On the summit of a rock, overlooking the Median city of Chaon, she constructed another garden, surpassing in beauty that of Bughistan ; and here she erected a palace, an eagle's eyrie, from every part of which she could observe the tented array of her troops below, as Balak and Balaam viewed that of Israel. While her victorious soldiers spread carnage and desolation before her, her track was marked, as she passed on, by the healing finger of art, apparent in every captured city. At Ecbatana she built another stately palace, and embellished the town with aqueducts and conduits, furnishing an inexhaustible supply of water ; and, to facilitate communication, she cut a road through a neighbouring mountain, over which she marched her whole army. Advancing into Persia, she added its rich provinces to her dominions, and then, reverting to her passion for the arts, studded them with cities and palaces, levelled mountains, and in other places raised artificial heights, as imperishable monuments of her power. Again in motion, she overcame Egypt, and entering the parched deserts of Libya, paused only where, at the sacred fountain of Hercules, the oracle of Jupiter Ammon met her with the words of fate. Then she learnt that, whatever dangers might threaten her, her reign

would continue till Ninyas, her son, conspired against her life, when she would disappear from the sight of man, though she would receive divine honours after death.

Semiramis returned to Babylon a victor and a heroine, but her restless spirit, instead of being fatigued with conquest, thirsted for fresh glory, and she soon cast her eyes towards the golden soil of India. That land was then, as in after-ages, regarded as an inexhaustible mine of wealth, abounding in gold and silver, and stored with every precious gem ; and the population, though more warlike than their descendants, promised, as far as concerned their own prowess, an easy prey to a resolute adventurer. But India drew from her matted forests more formidable defenders than her enervated sons ; and the King relied less on his soldiers than on a countless host of elephants, trained to war, and ready at any moment to repel every invader. Semiramis, whose judgment equalled her courage, well understood the effect which these terrible antagonists produced on the troops of more northerly nations, and, to avert such a casualty, she devised an expedient worthy of an age when war was but an infant science. The hides of three hundred thousand oxen, slaughtered by her command, furnished a covering for wicker elephants, placed on the backs of camels, each of which, to give further colouring to the deception, was led by a keeper, in accordance with the Indian usage. A million of infantry, and five hundred thousand horse, if the testimony of antiquity may be credited, supported this otherwise impotent armament ; and the expedition was accompanied by a corps of shipwrights, charged, as their exclusive duty, with the conveyance overland of portable boats, for the purpose of transporting the army across the Indus.

On the banks of this magnificent river, Shabrohates, King of India, had assembled a mighty and countless host to defend the frontier of his empire. Four thousand vessels of bamboo guarded the passage, and seven thousand of the dreaded elephants, each carrying a battalion on his back, formed an impenetrable phalanx along the shore. But nothing could withstand the onslaught of Semiramis, who, indifferent to danger, threw herself into the midst of the fight, and, by her presence and example, fired her soldiers with unconquerable ardour. A thousand of the Indian boats were sunk ; the vaunted line of elephants was broken ; and, placing herself at the head of her guards, Semiramis took possession of the gate of India.

But the rout of the Indians was not so complete as the Assyrians supposed. Learning from a deserter the secret of the counterfeit elephants, which had greatly aggravated their panic, they faced about, driving their own huge beasts before them ; and the King, with an overwhelming force of infantry, himself encountered Semiramis, engaging the warrior queen in single combat. For a time the conflict was equal, but, in an unguarded moment, Semiramis was severely wounded, and flying from the field, owed her life to the swiftness of her horse. With difficulty she reached the river, where a bridge of boats, which she had taken the precaution to construct, secured a passage across ; and gaining the opposite bank with a remnant of her forces, she ordered the bridge to be destroyed, thus arresting pursuit, though, at the same time, she cut off the retreat of the bravest of her soldiers.

The tide of the great Queen's fortune had now turned, and the moment had arrived when, perhaps at the suggestion of some wily priest, the prediction of the Libyan

oracle was to be fulfilled. Justin accuses her of entertaining too tender an attachment for her son Ninyas, who was remarkable for his personal beauty, and alleges that this circumstance provoked the youthful prince to take her life ; but, whatever the cause, it is generally allowed that Ninyas, weary of her usurpation, did conspire with the chief eunuch to destroy his mother, though it is said that she discovered their design, and quietly resigned the crown, considering that her son was but the blind instrument of fate. But the ruling passion was strong in death : she was still the victim of a false ambition ; and, while abdicating the throne, asserted a right to divine honours. No longer ruling as a queen, this arrogant and guilty woman claimed to be worshipped as a goddess.

The throne of Babylon was destined to be ascended by another woman, whose genius was scarcely inferior to that of Semiramis. Nitocris—such was this great Queen's name—was the most formidable opponent of the growing power of the Medes ; and, while renowned in arms, was not unmindful of the arts. Her public structures had this advantage over those of Semiramis—that they were generally dedicated to some useful object. To strengthen the defences of her capital, she diverted the Euphrates from its bed, pouring its waters into a vast artificial basin, while workmen, engaged in the empty channel of the river, raised massive walls on either bank, inclosing the divided sections of the city, which, for the convenience of the inhabitants, she made to communicate by a drawbridge. The stream was then permitted to return to its bed ; and embankments on either side, for a considerable distance beyond Babylon, prevented it from inundating the surrounding country, when the melted snows of Armenia raised the level of the water.

Nitocris emblazoned her sepulchre with a severe reproof of the avarice of mankind, which, in the sentiment conveyed, inspires a favourable impression of her understanding and character. The mausoleum of the departed Queen was erected over the principal gate of the city, at a considerable height from the ground, and a slab in its face was inscribed in conspicuous characters with these words—"SHOULD ANY ONE OF MY SUCCESSORS, KINGS OF BABYLON, FIND HIMSELF IN WANT OF MONEY, LET HIM OPEN THIS SEPULCHRE, AND TAKE AS MUCH AS HE CHOOSES ; BUT IF HE BE NOT IN WANT, LET HIM NOT OPEN IT ; FOR THAT WERE NOT WELL." The tomb remained unopened till, after the capture of Babylon by the Medes, the crown fell to Darius, when it was sacrilegiously entered by that monarch, who, as a stranger and alien, was not restrained by those feelings of reverence cherished by the descendants of Nitocris. To his disgust, however, he found within nothing but the mouldering corpse of the Queen, surmounted by this inscription—"HADST THOU NOT BEEN INSATIABLY COVETOUS, AND GREEDY OF THE MOST SORDID GAIN, THOU WOULDST NOT HAVE SOUGHT GOLD IN THE CHAMBERS OF THE DEAD."

A third Queen of Babylon, Amytis, wife of Nebuchadnezzar, disputes with Semiramis the honour of having originated the hanging gardens. She was the daughter of Astyages, King of Media, and the story affirms that on reaching Babylon, she so deeply regretted the beautiful mountainous scenery of her native land, that Nebuchadnezzar constructed these magnificent pleasure-grounds to dissipate her melancholy. Little else is known of this illustrious woman, except that she was endowed with extraordinary personal attractions, and possessed great influence with her eccentric consort.

The prophet Daniel leads us to conclude that the regal

dignity was not bestowed on all the wives of the kings of Babylon ; and, in the account of Belshazzar's feast, only one of the monarch's spouses is distinguished by the title of Queen. This record also shows that it was customary for the Babylonian women to take part with their husbands in the public festivities; and its testimony is corroborated by other authorities. On such occasions, indeed, they were released from the restraints of ordinary life, encouraged to partake freely of the wine-cup, and to divert and exhilarate the company. It is a melancholy proof of the low social condition of the Assyrians, that this object was often achieved at the expense of modesty, and held superior to such a consideration. Dancing, still the favourite spectacle of Eastern voluptuaries, was the most attractive feature at these entertainments ; and ladies of the court, as well as hired dancing-girls, veiled, rather than attired, in thin transparent garments, tripped through their too light measures before the guests, to the sound of the harp and drum. Women of all ranks dressed as expensively as their means would permit, and flowing robes, said to have been first designed by Semiramis, probably on her elevation to the throne, were invariably the prevailing fashion. So early as the time of Joshua, the Assyrians were noted for their costly attire ; and Achan, the son of Carmi, when questioned as to the spoil he had secreted (Joshua vii. 19 to 21), includes in his booty "a goodly Babylonish garment." Ladies, and the wives of opulent merchants, who traded with Egypt and the rich dependency of Tyre, were profusely decked with jewels ; and few deemed their elaborate toilet complete without a pair of lustrous ear-rings, bracelets studded with gems, and armlets and anklets of the purest gold. Black sandals, slightly bordered with red, contrasted well with their delicate white feet, over which they were secured,

at the instep, by a fringed loop, clasped by a jewel. The eyebrows and hair were dyed black, and the long tresses, which often descended to the waist, were elaborately braided, and bound with a fillet. Mr. Layard conjectures that cosmetics were used to beautify the complexion ; and relates a story from Nicolaus of Damascus, in which Parsondes, a young Assyrian noble, accuses Nanarus, viceroy of Babylon, of imitating the practices of women, by underlining his eyes with stibium, and painting his face with white lead. When Parsondes falls into the power of Nanarus, the latter, in revenge, determines to make his traducer so effeminate that he shall not be easily distinguished from a lady ; and, with this view, he commands his myrmidons to "shave and rub with a pumice-stone the whole of his body except his head ; bathe him twice a day and anoint him ; let him underline his eyes and plait his hair ; let him learn to sing and play on the harp ; and accompany it with his voice, that he may be amongst the female musicians." The tyrant's injunctions were fulfilled ; and by constant restriction to the employments and little arts of the softer sex, Parsondes, from being the most manly character at the Assyrian court, became a miracle of effeminacy.

Marriage, instead of being a lottery, was a mere investment of money among the Assyrians. Herodotus relates that once a year the damsels of marriageable age were brought in a body to one place, and severally disposed of to the highest bidders, who, as a condition of purchase, were bound to make them their wives. The venerable historian describes the scene with more than his usual *naïveté*. The most beautiful, as might be expected, had precedence at the rostrum, and was put up for sale by a crier, when, says our authority, "such men among the Babylonians as were rich, and desirous of marrying, used

to bid against one another and purchase the handsomest. But such of the lower classes as were anxious to wed, did not require a beautiful form, but were willing to take the plainest damsels with a sum of money. For when the crier had finished selling the handsomest of the maidens, he made the ugliest stand up, or one that was a cripple, and put her up to auction for the person who would marry her with the least money, until she was adjudged to the man who offered to take the smallest sum. The fund for this dowry was obtained from the sale of the handsomest maidens, who thus portioned out the ugly and the crippled."

The happy purchasers of the beauties, as well as the mercenary bargainers for the plain (not always, perhaps, the least fortunate), were obliged to give security that the contract of marriage should be duly and legally performed, and the newly-acquired wife publicly acknowledged. If the parties, however, on coming together, could not live in harmony, the transaction was annulled, and the disappointed purchaser received back his money. A maiden, however, had no voice in the disposal of her hand previous to this betrothal, nor could a man give his daughter to whom he pleased; but all must be brought to the auction, and hear their fate from the lips of the crier.

As might be inferred from such a regulation, female virtue, the source of every noble aspiration, was regarded with contempt by the Babylonians, and, indeed, was absolutely discountenanced by their laws. Women were held in the most cruel subjection, and, as if to rivet their chains, compelled to take part in their own debasement. This principle was even introduced into religious observances, and the practices enforced at the Temple of Venus, which are described in the vivid pages of Herodotus, represent a depravity scarcely human. The national

religion, like most of the Eastern creeds, was originally pure, and entirely opposed to such orgies, being confined to the worship of a supreme and beneficent Creator, represented by the sun; but, as time rolled on, the Magians, or fire-worshippers, who became the guardians of the Assyrian faith, established innovations, which gradually paved the way for the worst forms of idolatry; and hence arose the general demoralization.

It is doubtful whether women were admitted to the functions of the priesthood by the Magians, though in later times fire was typified as a goddess. One of their modes of worship is mentioned by Job, when he declares in his address to his friends, that he has never been enticed to kiss his hand to the sun, or to adore the serene brightness of the moon; and the prophet Ezekiel (Ezek. viii. 16) records that, on entering the inner court of the Temple, "behold, at the door of the Temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men with their backs toward the Temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the east, and they worshipped the sun toward the east." Fire was considered to represent the sun; and Xenophon, in his account of a sacred procession of the Persian Sabians, describes Cyrus as following censers of fire, carried through the city for popular adoration.

Under such a religion, soon deteriorated by the corruption of hero-worship, and all the abuses of paganism, woman, as a weak and defenceless being, became a legitimate prey to the stronger sex, whose evil passions recognised no restraint, human or divine. Even her life was deemed of little value, and too often fell a sacrifice to unscrupulous violence.

The episode of Pyramus and Thisbe, which must not be set down as a fiction of the poets, offers an illustration of

the melancholy consequences which sometimes arose from their disregard of the natural affections. This ill-fated pair, who were both remarkable for their great personal beauty, had conceived for each other a romantic passion, which their parents refused to sanction ; but a chink in the wall separating their dwellings enabled them to interchange their vows ; and these stolen meetings deepened and confirmed their attachment. At length, they concerted an elopement, engaging to meet at a well-known mulberry-tree, near the tomb of Ninus, and beyond the walls of the city, whence, secure from pursuit, they could fly to another province, and pass their lives together. Thisbe arrived first at the spot, when she was terrified by the approach of a lion, and, winged by terror, took refuge in a neighbouring cave, inadvertently dropping her veil as she fled. Soon afterwards, Pyramus, who had experienced some difficulty in quitting the city, came in breathless haste to the tomb, discovered the veil, which had become dabbled with blood, and supposing Thisbe had been devoured by wild beasts, threw himself on his sword, and instantly expired. Thisbe now made her appearance, and discovering his bleeding corpse, snatched up the sword, and completed the tragedy by plunging it in her heart.

But whatever rigour the Babylonians exercised towards their own countrywomen, it could not be compared with their inhumanity towards the women of conquered nations ; and Holy Writ refers, in the terrible denunciations of Ezekiel, to their cruel treatment of female captives. The proud city of Tyre, when threatened with the army of Nebuchadnezzar, is told, " her daughters which are in the field shall be slain by the sword ;" and again, " he shall slay with the sword thy daughters in the field," as if such ferocity was so unnatural and so incredible, that it called for this emphatic repetition. Egypt is

warned that the Assyrians shall cast her down, "even her and the daughters of the famous nations, unto the nether parts of the earth, with them that go down into the pit;" and similar predictions are addressed to the Jews. In one of the sculptures discovered at Nineveh, women are represented on the battlements of a besieged town imploring quarter; in others, they are depicted by the savage and exulting artist, as tearing their hair, and throwing dust on their heads, in all the agony of despair. It is conjectured that the figures of one of these granite tableaux represent the women of Tyre. They wear the flowing robes of Assyria, of which their native city was a dependency—the fashions of the mother-country not being so easily renounced as its authority. Thus the sacred narrative is corroborated and illustrated by these tombs of history.

The revolt of the Babylonians from the Persians, during the usurpation of Otanes the impostor, was stained by a revolting massacre of Assyrian women, thousands of whom, without distinction of rank or age, were slain by their own nearest relatives, solely to save the provisions which they might otherwise have consumed. The Babylonians had been long preparing for an outbreak; and the confusion arising from the assassination of Otanes, whose history is given in our next chapter, seemed to offer a favourable moment for executing their design. Their chief difficulty was the scarcity of provisions; and, on raising the standard of rebellion, they determined, as the best mode of eking out their scanty supplies, that all the women should be put to death, each man being permitted to preserve one wife and his mother. Without delay, the cruel resolution was put in force; the tender claims of youth, the melting looks of beauty, the moving appeals of helpless and vene-

rable age, all the ties of kindred and nature, were alike disregarded by the ruthless executioners ; and in a few hours, there was no house in Babylon in which there was not a woman dead.

The Persians, headed by Darius, who had succeeded to the vacant throne, soon encompassed the city ; but the Babylonians felt confident in the strength of their walls, their varied means of defence, and the unsuitableness of the surrounding plain for the support of the besiegers. Day after day they appeared on the ramparts, insolently taunting Darius and his soldiers, and treating their assaults on the massive fortifications with derision and contempt. On one occasion, a popular chief, amidst the applauding laughter of his companions, called out to the King and his courtiers—" Why sit ye there, O Persian ! will ye not be off ? for ye will not capture our city till a mule brings forth a foal ! " He spoke in derision, but his words were afterwards set down as the language of prophecy.

In the camp of Darius was a Persian noble, named Zopyrus, one of the seven conspirators against Otanes, whose adventures are recorded hereafter ; and this great officer was meditating in his tent how to advance the siege, when his groom brought him the surprising intelligence that his favourite mule had cast a foal. Zopyrus instantly recollected the taunt of the Babylonian chief, and supposing that the man, without being conscious of the fact, spoke under divine inspiration, he regarded the incident as betokening that he was to be the captor of the city. After long deliberation, he thought that this result could only be attained by stratagem ; and hearing that the King would deem no reward too great for such a service, he resolved to effect it at any cost. In this mood he cut off his nose and ears, and shaved his face, a mark of

the greatest ignominy among the ancients ; and then presented himself before Darius. The King, hardly recognising his counsellor and friend, and supposing that he had been treated thus barbarously by an enemy, burst into a passion of grief on his appearance, when to his amazement, Zopyrus informed him that the mutilation he beheld had been inflicted by his own hand, and acquainted him with the design he had in view. It was therefore arranged, with the consent of the monarch, that Zopyrus should desert to the enemy, and lead them to believe these injuries had been inflicted by Darius, by which means he might obtain the command of the army, and then, in accordance with a concerted plan, deliver up the city to the Persians.

The stratagem succeeded admirably. Zopyrus, presenting himself at the gates, was admitted into the city, and conducted before the council of Babylonian chiefs, whom, after calling their attention to his mutilated and bleeding condition, and inveighing bitterly against Darius, he addressed as follows :—"Now, therefore, I come to you, O Babylonians ! the greatest blessing ; and to Darius, his army, and the Persian nation, the greatest curse : for I know all their plans, and they, who have subjected me to this infamous treatment, shall find I can frustrate them." This harangue was received with acclamations by the council ; his appearance bore testimony to his sincerity, and on his claiming the command of a sortie, it was readily conceded to him. These favourable impressions were confirmed when he returned a victor, Darius, agreeably to their arrangement, having planted a division in such a situation that he could easily cut it in pieces : and three successive sallies being attended with the same result, his influence and authority, from the first very great, became paramount. The moment now approached

when his secret object was to be accomplished. On an appointed day, the Persian monarch invested every side of the city, and the Babylonians as eagerly manned the walls, and impatiently awaited the attack. Arrows and missiles flew in mingled clouds from the ramparts, and were returned from the trenches, or from moveable towers, raised to the level of the parapet, while huge battering rams were brought into operation below. But valour is no safeguard against treachery, and, at the very moment that the Babylonians were shouting with triumph, Zopyrus, clandestinely opening the gates, admitted the Persians into the city, and thus put an end to the struggle.

It would appear that the women whose lives had been spared on the outbreak of the revolt, were, like the others, barbarously massacred during the progress of the siege, with the same view of eking out the provisions; for Herodotus, at the close of the narrative from which these facts are gleaned, leads us to conclude that none survived. What was the number thus sacrificed it is impossible to conjecture: but as Darius, on restoring order, levied a contribution of fifty thousand women on the neighbouring provinces, expressly to supply wives for the adults, the extent to which the butchery was carried cannot be questioned. Well might such an act bring down on the accursed spot the full measure of Divine vengeance; and no thrill of sympathy is awakened in the breast, when we read that Babylon, the Golden City, the Glory of Kingdoms, the Beauty of the Chaldees, the Tender and Delicate, a Lady, a Queen for ever—for by all these designations, and many similar ones, it is especially distinguished in the sacred pages of Holy Writ—Babylon the Great had fallen, fallen to rise no more!

VI.

PERSIA AND CENTRAL ASIA.

ALTHOUGH the empires of Egypt and Assyria, from being mentioned in the first annals of mankind, are usually regarded as the earliest kingdoms of the earth, it is doubtful whether they can claim priority over that of Persia, which for ages swayed the sceptre of the East. Sir William Jones considers the Persian monarchy to have been the oldest in the world ; and has ascertained, from the half-faded pages of the *Dubistan*, a record of great weight, that it existed under its original name of *Irán* before the foundation of Nineveh. Its antiquity is attested also by the structure of the language, which Sir William found to be the mother of the Sanscrit, and consequently of the Zend and Parsi, as well as the Greek, Latin, and Gothic ; and the character of the original population, which comprised three distinct races of men, inhabiting the vast expanse of India, Arabia, and Tartary, affords further evidence of the fact. In the time of Esther (*Esther* i. 1), the Persian dominions, which are described as reaching from India even unto Ethiopia, comprised "an hundred and seven and twenty provinces ;" and it is afterwards mentioned by Daniel, under Darius the Mede, the Cyaxares II. of profane history, as being divided into the same number of principalities, each governed by its own satrap. This was subsequent to the acquisition of Babylon, as related at the close of the preceding chapter.

It is impossible to ascertain precisely what was the first religion of the ancient Persians, but it was no doubt a form

of the Sabian creed, which was very early established in the East. Mankind, having lost the knowledge of the true God, naturally looked with veneration on the sun, the moon, and the planets, to which they ascribed the guardianship of the world ; and the Magi soon added the worship of fire, as their symbol, emblem, and type. But this system, after enduring for ages, was modified and reformed by Zoroaster, an eminent and learned Magus, who, by inventing magic, was able to work miracles, and thus imposed himself on the Persians as a messenger from Heaven. He is by some confounded with Moses ; and Plutarch, adopting the fabulous chronology of his contemporaries, represents him to have lived about five thousand years before the siege of Troy. But it appears that his real era was about six centuries before the birth of Christ—that he was, if not of Jewish extraction, at least born in Palestine, and was there servant to a Jewish prophet, who for an act of disobedience, smote him with an incurable leprosy. Hence he is supposed to be Gehazi, the servant of Elijah ; and many circumstances concur in support of this conjecture. Dismissed by his master from Judæa, he secluded himself for a time at Aderbayan, where he conceived his religious system ; and then, through the instrumentality of the Magi, obtained an introduction to Darius, at Persepolis, and easily converted him to his doctrines. These embraced the two great principles of good and evil—the first represented by Oromazes, or God, and typified by light ; the other by Aramanus, or the Demon, typified by darkness ; and between these powers, Mithras, or the sun, acted as mediator. God was to be worshipped with thanks and praise ; the demon appeased and propitiated by sacrifice ; and the majestic orb still exacted the adoration of the devout. Moral precepts, pilfered from the Hebrew Testa-

ment, a tiresome series of ablutions, and the practice of vows, were enjoined as solemn religious duties, but had little, if any, real influence on the character of the people.

The first Persian king of whom we have any credible account, is the elder Cyaxares, the father of Astyages, who, under the name of Ahasuerus, appears in the Sacred Writings as the husband of Esther. Aryenis, a Lydian princess, of great talent and beauty, connected these monarchs with the ancient kingdom of Lydia, and became a bond of alliance between her native country and Persia. It is possible that she was the Vashti of Scripture, mentioned in the book of Esther ; but this is mere conjecture. Her marriage with Astyages or Ahasuerus, at that time only heir to the crown, was brought about in a singular manner, illustrating both the barbarous practices and the superstition of those remote times. King Cyaxares maintained in his household some Scythian hunters, to whom, on a particular occasion, he confided several youths of distinction, with directions that they should be trained in the use of the bow and javelin, and the various exercises of the chase. Shortly afterwards, the Scythians fell under the displeasure of the monarch, in consequence of their having failed to procure the usual supply of game ; and being severely reprov'd for their inattention, they resolved, in revenge, to kill one of the youths intrusted to their charge, and serve his corpse up in a pasty to the King, as the produce of their day's sport. Cyaxares partook without suspicion of the horrible dish, when its real character was discovered, and search being made for the Scythians, it was found they had fled to Lydia. Alyates, the monarch of that country, instead of driving such monsters from his dominions, afforded them a ready asylum, and refused to surrender them to the ambassadors of Cyaxares. A bloody war

was the consequence, and the Persian sovereign having gained some advantages, pushed forward at the head of a mighty host, towards the capital of his adversary. The two armies met on the way, at a spot well suited for an engagement ; but the battle had scarcely begun, when a thick darkness fell over the field, and the hostile troops became mingled in a promiscuous and undistinguishable mass. Regarding this interruption as a direct interposition of the gods, the two monarchs, in the midst of the awful pause that ensued, mutually concluded a peace, and, to cement their amity, arranged a marriage between the Persian prince Astyages and the princess Aryenis, which was celebrated with great pomp a few days afterwards.

The history of Vashti, whether she were Aryenis or not, furnishes, in the simple but precise and emphatic language of the Bible, some very material facts in reference to the position and social influence of the ancient queens of Persia. As at Babylon, so in Persia, but one of the wives of the King was distinguished by the regal title ; and we are told (Esther i. 9), that while her consort entertained his lords, " Vashti the Queen made a feast for the women in the royal house which belonged to King Ahasuerus ;" implying, not only that she was the sole partner of the throne, but that the other wives of the King were subject to her authority, and partly contributed to her state. At the banquet of Belshazzar, in Babylon, the royal table was graced by the ladies of the court, but here they are described as feasting by themselves, in a separate apartment of the palace ; and the seclusion in which they are kept evinces how differently they were treated in the two kingdoms. It was not till the seventh day of the great feast in the garden, " when the heart of the King was merry with wine," that the

seven chamberlains of his palace were commanded to "bring Vashti the Queen before the King with the crown royal on, to show the people and princes her beauty, for she was fair to look on." The royal lady heard of the wishes of her lord with unmingled astonishment. Such a proceeding was at variance both with etiquette and decorum, as they were practised at the Persian court ; and, relying on the influence she possessed with Ahasuerus, "Vashti refused to come at the King's commandment by his chamberlains : therefore was the King very wroth, and his anger burned within him."

The incidents which followed show how complete was the subjection of the wife to the husband, as well in the humbler households of his subjects as in that of the King ; and how implicit was the obedience exacted from her. In the case of Vashti, her little wilfulness was deemed sufficient ground for a divorce, as her example, in the opinion of the very wise men of the King's council, was calculated, if she escaped punishment, to excite a rebellious spirit in every woman in the kingdom. Ahasuerus particularly desires that the sentence passed upon her shall be "according to law ;" and "Memucan answered before the King and the Princes, Vashti the Queen hath not done wrong to the King only, but also to all the Princes, and to all the people that are in all the provinces of the King Ahasuerus. For this deed of the Queen shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes, when it is reported the King Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the Queen to be brought in before him, but she came not : Likewise shall the ladies of Persia and Media say this day unto all the King's princes, which have heard of the deed of the Queen. Thus shall arise too much contempt and wrath." In fact, these eastern sages were afraid to face their wives

under the influence of such an event ; and even after they had effected the ruin of the misguided Queen, they were not content till Ahasuerus was persuaded to make a solemn proclamation throughout the empire that "all the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both great and small."

The poor Queen was in some measure avenged by the remorse which seized upon her husband, when his enervated mind recovered from his protracted orgies ; for in the words of the Sacred Volume, "he remembered Vashti, and what was decreed against her." Though the parasites of his depraved court assembled, by public proclamation, all the most beautiful women of his vast empire, in the hope of dispelling his melancholy, it was not till he beheld the innocent face of Esther that he deigned to accept consolation. Her transcendant attractions enchained his admiration, and procured her speedy elevation to the regal dignity. This step, when once resolved on, was carried out with some formality, evidently in accordance with established usage ; and, to mark that no ceremony was omitted, it is recorded that Ahasuerus "set the royal crown upon her head, and made her Queen instead of Vashti." The coronation, or investiture, was succeeded by a banquet, the nuptial feast, which the royal bridegroom threw open "to all his princes, and his servants, even Esther's feast ; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the estate of the King."

The queenly crown, though it might dazzle her ambition, by no means secured for its possessor a share in the government, or even the precarious advantage of the royal ear ; and, when first importuned by Mordecai, Esther had been thirty days without once seeing the King. Nor, indeed, could she present herself before him

unbidden, except at the risk of her life ; and in excusing her inaction on this great occasion, she reminded Mordecai " That whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the King in the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the King shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live." Ahasuerus, who usually acted more like a wild beast than a man, condescended to exercise his clemency, when the trembling Queen appeared before his throne, and thus, more fortunate than her predecessor, she escaped the cruel rigour of the law. The heart of the ruthless monarch was tamed by her beauty ; at her request his barbarous design of slaughtering the Jews was abandoned ; and the melting plea of a woman, more persuasive than the eloquence of wicked counsellors, saved a whole people from destruction.

Aryenis, or, as it seems more proper to call her, Vashti, was the mother of two royal children—Cyaxares the Second, mentioned in the Bible as Darius the Mede, who succeeded his father on the throne, and a daughter, named Mandane. The latter, on approaching the critical age of womanhood, became a source of uneasiness to her jealous father, whose slumbers had been disturbed by a dream, which, being submitted to the Magi, was interpreted as denoting that she should become the mother of a son, who would subvert the throne of Persia, and subdue by his prowess the whole Asiatic continent. To prevent such a result, the King gave her in marriage to a Persian of inferior rank, whose humble means, he imagined, would prevent their offspring from executing, if not from entertaining, any ambitious projects ; but a second dream having revived his alarm, just as his daughter gave birth to a son, he tore the helpless infant from his mother's arms, and gave secret orders for his destruction. The

task was confided to Harpagus, his principal minister, whose devotion and fidelity had won his confidence ; but it was more easily conceived than executed. Harpagus revealed his instructions to his wife ; and the tender instincts of woman, ever shrinking from violence, and especially aroused by the sight of guileless infancy, urged her to intercede for the little innocent, and induce her ferocious husband to spare his life. Though she did not completely succeed, her entreaties and representations made such an impression on Harpagus, that he determined not to dip his own hands in the child's blood ; but in order to carry out the King's command, he sent for one of the royal herdsmen, named Mitrdates, and enjoined him, on pain of death, to convey the infant into Media, and there leave him exposed on the bleakest part of a desolate mountain. This heartless design, however, was prevented by another woman—Cyno, or Spaco, the herdsman's wife, who, on her husband's return home, discovered the child, was won by his beauty and endearing looks, and, worming from Mitrdates the secret of his birth, prevailed on him by her tears and supplications to evade the orders of Harpagus, and bring up the royal infant as their own son.

Thus two women preserved to history and to mankind the great Cyrus, who, if his exploits conferred little real benefit on his species, was yet the most august of Asiatic despots, and ranks with the most illustrious and renowned conquerors. His name possesses a peculiar interest for posterity, from its association with the sublime denunciations of the Prophets, particularly with those of Isaiah (Isaiah xlv.), more than a century before his birth ; and, in his wonderful preservation as an infant, we may recognise the overruling providence of the Almighty, which had so long predestined him for an

instrument of His will and His vengeance. It is said that Cyrus himself was forcibly struck by the language of Isaiah, when, after the capture of Babylon, the prophetic verse was pointed out to him by his Jewish officers, and he saw his very name recorded on the ancient scroll.

Singular it is that a monarch who owed his deliverance from an early death to the gentle sympathies of woman, should, after a career of unequalled glory, receive from a woman's hand the most signal overthrow. The richest territories of Asia, subdued by his arms, could not satisfy the rapacious ambition of Cyrus, and, in an inauspicious moment, he cast his eyes on the territory of the Massagetsæ, which extended from the borders of his extensive dominions, where the broad stream of the Araxes formed a natural boundary, to the towering mountains of the Caucasus. This immense plain was inhabited by a hardy and savage race, living in a state of nature, but who, uncorrupted by Asiatic luxury, preferred death to the loss of their freedom. The government was held by a queen—Tomyris, a woman of indomitable spirit, but who felt no interest in the elevation of her sex; and the women of the Massagetsæ, if we may credit the statement of Herodotus, had lost every better instinct of the human heart. Cyrus, aware of the difficulty of entering the country, sent an embassy to Tomyris with a proposal of marriage: but the shrewd Queen penetrated his object and rejected the overture with disdain. He then advanced rapidly with his army, and was preparing to throw a bridge over the river, when a message from Tomyris, who was calmly awaiting the attack, interrupted his proceedings, and placed the contest on a new footing. "King of the Medes," said the warrior Queen, by the mouth of her envoy, "desist from your great exertions; for you cannot be certain that they will

succeed ; and having desisted, be content with your own dominions, and suffer me to reign over mine. But if you will not attend to my advice, and prefer everything before peace — in a word, if you are very anxious to make trial of the Massagetæ, toil no longer in throwing a bridge over the river, but do you cross to our side, while we retire three days' march, or if you had rather receive us at your side, do you the like." Cyrus, who believed himself to be under the special protection of Heaven, accepted this bold challenge, in opposition to the advice and remonstrances of his counsellors, and crossed the river. In the first conflict, he feigned a retreat, leaving his camp to the Massagetæ, who, unaccustomed to so much luxury, were speedily overcome by the Persian wines, and, while in this condition, were again attacked by Cyrus, and put completely to the rout. The base stratagem greatly exasperated Tomyris, particularly as her son was among its victims ; and she sent another message to Cyrus, threatening, if he did not immediately quit her territories, that she would glut him with blood. Cyrus still advancing, the two armies met in a sanguinary battle, which Herodotus, who took great pains to arrive at the facts, describes as the most obstinate that ever was fought between barbarians. It terminated in the total defeat of the Persians, Cyrus himself falling on the field. Tomyris, who retained no characteristic of her sex, inhumanly exulted over his corpse, and filling a skin with blood, thrust his head into the pool, exclaiming, "Thou hast indeed ruined me, though I am victorious in battle, but I survive to keep my word, and glut thee with blood."

Cyrus was succeeded by his son Cambyses, the conqueror of Egypt, a barbarous and despicable tyrant, who introduced the custom of intermarrying with sisters,

which afterwards became so common in Persia. Being desirous of marrying his sister Meroc, he consulted the Persian judges as to the legality of the union, and, afraid to oppose his wishes, they informed him, after a long conference, that though they could find no statute which sanctioned such a match, there was a law that the King of Persia could do whatever he pleased, and therefore, if he chose to make Meroc his wife, the marriage must be perfectly legal. But the queenly diadem could not reconcile Meroc to a fate so lamentable, particularly as Cambyzes, in a fit of jealousy, had recently put her favourite brother, the brave Smerdis, to death; and the splendours of a barbaric court failed to soothe her suffering mind. One day she was present at a fight between a lion and a whelp, contrived for the entertainment of Cambyzes, when a second whelp, seeing the lion gain the advantage, flew to the assistance of its mate; on which Meroc burst into tears, and being asked by the king the reason of her emotion, replied that the spectacle reminded her forcibly of the fate of Smerdis, who had been slain, not by a stranger, but by his own brother, while here the very beasts of the forest remembered the tie of affinity, and nobly stood by each other. This answer so enraged Cambyzes, that he rushed on the unhappy Queen before the court, and, by an inhuman kick, put an end at once to her sorrows and her life.

Cambyzes perished miserably, by an accident which, from its resemblance to an outrage he had committed on the Egyptian Apis, was regarded by a superstitious age as a judgment of the gods; and his last agonies were aggravated by the intelligence that one of the Magi, bearing the same name as his murdered brother, and claiming to be the real Smerdis, had taken advantage of his absence from Persia to usurp the throne. This

imposture, which baffled the scrutiny of the wisest of the Persians, was destined to be unmasked by a woman. One of the seven princes of Persia, Otanes, a man of invincible spirit, had a daughter in the royal household, who had been married to the late king, and now fell to his successor ; and, being assured by Cambyzes that his brother Smerdis was dead, he conceived a suspicion that the occupant of the throne was Smerdis the Magus, particularly as the new monarch shut himself up in the citadel, never showing himself to the people, or summoning the great nobles to his presence. By bribing a chamberlain, Otanes contrived to send a message to Phædyma, his daughter, acquainting her with his surmise, and desiring to know if it were a fact, at the same time instructing her, if she had no personal knowledge of Smerdis the Prince, to make inquiries on the subject of the Princess Atossa, his sister, who was also an inmate of the palace. The reply of Phædyma confirmed the suspicions of her father ; for she informed him that having never seen Smerdis the Prince, she was unable to speak to his identity ; and as to communicating with Atossa, it was impossible, as the ladies of the palace were now all kept in separate apartments, and unable to hold any intercourse with each other. Otanes then remembered that Smerdis the Magus, when a young man, had had his ears cut off by Cambyzes, as a punishment for some grave offence ; and, by a second message, he apprised Phædyma of the circumstance, and adjured her to ascertain, on the first opportunity, whether the King had ears or not ; as if not, there could be no doubt that he was Smerdis the Magus. Phædyma undertook the task ; and one night, when the Magus was asleep, cautiously raised his tresses of false hair, and feeling for his ears, found that her father's suspicions were correct. She speedily made him

acquainted with her discovery, and he lost no time, after taking the advice of his wife, in summoning the other six princes, and informing them of the imposture. His confederates were no less astonished than enraged ; but, at first, they hesitated how to proceed, in an exigency so unparalleled, till Darius, who was distinguished for his great resolution, recommended that they should force their way at once into the palace, and put the usurper to death. The proposal was warmly seconded by Gobryas, who concluded by saying, " Friends, shall we ever have a better opportunity to recover the sovereign power, or if we shall be unable to do so, to die ; seeing we who are Persians are governed by a Medic Magus, and one without ears ? I therefore give my voice that we yield to Darius, and that on breaking up this conference, we go nowhere else than straight to the Magus."

Meanwhile, the Magi, fearing discovery, sought, by gifts and promises, to gain over Prexaspes, who had been employed by Cambyzes to superintend the execution of Smerdis, and, pretending to fall into their design, he suffered them to lead him to the top of a high tower, whence he was to harangue the people, and declare that Smerdis was still alive, and now reigned over them. But Prexaspes, instead of carrying out their wishes, loudly proclaimed from the tower that he had really killed the brother of Cambyzes, and that the throne was usurped by one of the Magi ; and then, imprecating a malediction on the Persians if they submitted to such an imposture, threw himself headlong from the height, perishing on the spot. In the confusion that ensued, the seven conspirators gained access to the citadel, reached the presence-chamber, and slew both the impostor and his brother. The people, stimulated by their example, made a general attack on the Magi, many of whom fell victims to their

fury, and the day was afterwards commemorated by an annual festival, called "The Slaughter of the Magi," during which it was dangerous for a Magus to appear in the streets, or cross the threshold of his own dwelling.

On the death of the pretended king, the seven conspirators assembled to consider who should take his place on the vacant throne, when Darius, by an ingenious trick, secured the prize for himself, and became the husband both of Phædyma and Atossa.

Atossa, as the daughter of Cyrus, and a woman of great beauty, was the favourite of Darius, and to her it was owing that Persian ambition was first directed to Greece. At this time, there lived at the court of Persia a Greek physician, who, having performed a remarkable cure on the King, was rewarded with a large revenue, and a seat at the royal table, but strictly prohibited from returning to Greece; and, amidst the luxuries of his splendid captivity, he pined for the free air of his native land. While thus dejected, he was privately informed by Atossa that she was suffering severely from a cancer, the existence of which she desired to conceal from Darius; and he undertook to effect a complete cure of the disease, on a promise that, when this was accomplished, she should obtain the King's consent to his leaving Persia. Democedes—such was the physician's name—soon fulfilled his task, and it remained for the obliged Queen to redeem her word. Considering how this could be done, one day, when entertaining Darius, she broke out into an eloquent commendation of great actions, admonishing the King that they should be the first object with a powerful monarch, and that, instead of consuming his life in idleness, he should now be leading his army on a career of conquest, adding new territories to the Persian empire. Darius acknowledged the justice of her observations, and

to show his thirst for glory, assured her that at that very moment he was making the most extensive preparations for the invasion of Scythia, which he determined to conduct in person, and hoped to bring to a triumphant issue. "Give up the thought, O King," replied Atossa, "of marching first against the Scythians, for they will be in your power whenever you choose, but take my advice, and lead an army into Greece, for from the account I have heard, I am anxious to have Lacedæmonian, Argive, Athenian, and Corinthian attendants, and you have in your court the fittest man to inform you of everything concerning Greece: I mean Democedes." The answer of Darius was just what she wished. "Lady," said the King, "since you think it better that I should first reduce Greece, I will send Democedes there, in company with some Persians, to report on the condition of the country, and act accordingly." Thus the Queen obtained permission for Democedes to repair to Greece, but, by the King's command, he was so jealously watched by his companions, that it was not till he reached Crotona, his native city, that he found means to escape from their custody and claim the protection of his countrymen. Darius was greatly enraged at his escape; but was unable, from the operations he had commenced against Scythia, to carry out his purpose of invading Greece, and he bequeathed this project to his son Xerxes, who miserably failed in the attempt.

Xerxes, whose name has become a proverb for arrogance and folly, was not the eldest son of Darius, although, contrary to Persian custom, he was appointed his heir, claiming this priority in right of his mother Atossa, who was the daughter of Cyrus, while the mothers of the other sons of the King were only daughters of nobles. Herodotus intimates, however, that such a plea would

hardly have been admitted, if it had not been seconded by the intrigues of Atossa, whose influence over the King was unbounded ; and we may suppose that Darius was also won by the personal appearance of Xerxes ; for, of the five millions who are said to have followed his standard into Greece, the Hellenic historian assures us that none could compare in stature or beauty with their barbaric leader. Still, his elevation, by which his elder brothers were put aside, was undoubtedly owing mainly to Atossa, who was so loved by Darius that he caused her image to be made of beaten gold, and possibly placed it in the temple. Herodotus, indeed, mentions Arlystone as the person who received this affectionate tribute ; but Atossa appears to have been the only surviving daughter of Cyrus, and Arlystone may have been but another name of the same princess.

It was usual for the wives of the kings, and even of the nobles, to accompany them in their warlike expeditions, and thus share the hazards, if not the fatigues, of the campaign. Xerxes was accompanied in his march to Greece by his favourite wives, amongst whom was Queen Amestris, who, many years afterwards, in her old age, commanded fourteen noble children to be buried alive at the Nine Ways, near the city of Eion, to evince her gratitude to the gods for granting her so long a life. Eion, desecrated by this barbarous sacrifice, was the city so resolutely defended by Boges, the Persian governor, on the flight of Xerxes from Greece, when, rather than surrender, he put his wives to death, consumed their bodies on a funeral pile, and then threw himself into the flames.

At the battle of Issus, the wife, mother, and daughter of Darius the Second, the son and successor of Xerxes, were captured, with the Persian camp, by Alexander the

Great, and his treatment of the royal prisoners ranks among the noblest actions of that renowned warrior. The chariot of Darius having been taken on the field, with his bow, shield, and cloak lying within, it was thought that the monarch himself had fallen ; and this unfounded rumour was quickly reported to the captive ladies, and threw them into transports of grief. Their wailings and lamentations, breaking forth in the silence of night, reached the ear of Alexander, and he sent one of his principal officers with a message of condolence to the Queen, assuring her that Darius had neither been slain nor captured, but had, on quitting the field, outstripped pursuit, and must then be in safety. Next day, he went personally to the tent of his fair prisoners, accompanied by his favourite general Hephæstion. On their entry, the mother of Darius fell at the feet of Hephæstion, supposing, from his majestic appearance, that he was the great hero ; but Hephæstion drew back, and pointed to Alexander, who, advancing, raised the embarrassed lady from the ground, exclaiming that she had made no mistake, as Hephæstion was indeed his other self, and worthy to be accounted his equal. He then turned to the trembling Queen, who was bathed in tears, and endeavoured, by a few well-timed words, to soothe and reassure her, declaring that he had no personal quarrel with Darius, but was contending only for the empire of Asia, and that she and her daughters, while they remained under his care, should be treated with all the consideration due to their sex, character, and exalted station. Darius, when informed of his conduct on this occasion, burst into tears, and passionately exclaimed—“ O great God ! who disposest of the affairs of kings among men, preserve to me the empire of the Persians and Medes as thou gavest it ; but if it be thy will that I am to be no

longer King of Asia, let Alexander, in preference to all others, succeed to my power."

But it was not always as mere camp-followers that the queens and princesses of Persia accompanied the royal armies. Queen Artemisia, an ally and tributary of Persia, sailed in the fleet of Xerxes, when he invaded Greece, as commander of a squadron ; and "of the whole fleet," says Herodotus, "she furnished the most renowned ships, next to the Sidonians ; and of all the allies, gave the best advice to the King." She was strongly opposed to a naval attack on the Greeks, whom she considered invincible on the waves ; and it was hoped by her enemies that her opposition would give mortal offence to Xerxes, who, relying on his superior numbers, was eager to measure his strength with the famous triremes of Athens. But the monarch, who had the highest opinion of her sagacity, appreciated the sentiments by which she was actuated ; and the event was equally demonstrative of her courage and her wisdom. In the memorable naval engagement at Salamis, her ship was seen in the thick of the fight ; and being hard pressed by the enemy, and seeing no other way of escape, she adopted the bold manœuvre of running down the ship of Damasithymus, King of the Calyndians, and thus extricated herself from her perilous situation. Xerxes, who was a spectator of the conflict from a commanding point on the shore, could not repress his admiration at this dexterous feat, and loudly exclaimed—"My men have become women, and my women, men." The Athenians were no less mortified at her escape, considering it a great indignity to be baffled by a woman ; and the senate proclaimed a reward of ten thousand drachmas to whoever should effect her capture. Artemisia, however, was not destined to fall into their hands, as on the King's departure from the army,

he directed her to proceed to Ephesus, in charge of his sons, and she did not again engage in the war.

We have seen that the wives of the kings were sometimes made prisoners by the enemy ; and those of the nobles, who also accompanied their husbands, were subject to the same casualty. At the sanguinary engagement at Plataea, the wife of Pharandates, the Persian commander, was found on the field of battle, covered with gold and gems, and threw herself on her knees before Pausanias, exclaiming, " King of Sparta, deliver me, your supplicant, from captive servitude ; for you have thus far benefited me, by destroying those men, who pay no regard either to gods or heroes. I am by birth a Coan, daughter to Hegetarides ; and the Persians having taken me away by force from Cos, kept me." The reply of Pausanias instantly dispelled her apprehensions. " Lady," he said, " be of good heart, both as a suppliant, and moreover, if you have spoken the truth, and are indeed the daughter of Hegetarides of Cos, he is the best friend of all I have in those parts." And he delivered her into the charge of the ephori, and afterwards, when he had completely routed the Persians, saw her conducted in safety to her native place.

The beautiful Roxana, who shared the diadem and ruled the heart of Alexander, was a prize of war, having fallen into the hero's hands at the capture of the Bactrian stronghold of the Rock ; and it serves to illustrate the miserable social position of woman in that age, that Alexander was considered to have acted with great magnanimity, or perhaps folly, in raising her to the rank of his wife, since the right of conquest had made her his slave. She enjoyed her elevation but a few months, when the Macedonian King was snatched away by death ; but her expectant condition preserved to her the name, though

not the authority of Queen, for some time longer. This ascendancy, however, could not reconcile her to the degrading usages of the time and of her country, which admitted inferior wives to an humble share of her privileges, as well as of the affections of her husband ; and the remains of Alexander were still lying unburied, when, in a paroxysm of jealous hate, she seized his mistress Statira, stabbed both her and her sister, and then threw their bodies into a well, which she immediately filled up. Her violence and her guilt, aggravated by such horrible circumstances, drew down upon her a terrible, though deferred retribution ; and having fallen into the power of Cassander, she was thrown into a dungeon in the citadel of Amphipolis, and there, with her youthful son, murdered by the unscrupulous Glaucias.

Such barbarous institutions as prevailed among the Persians, in reference to women, naturally destroyed, in course of time, all those gentle feelings which we have been brought to consider as the characteristics of the sex ; and Persian women are represented as constantly committing the most frightful atrocities. The unnatural cruelty of Queen Amestris, the favourite consort of Xerxes, at the Nine Ways, in Greece, has already been mentioned, and her treatment of the wife of Masistes was, if possible, still more revolting. This ill-fated woman had had the misfortune to excite the admiration of Xerxes, but she firmly rejected his disgraceful overtures, and, being the wife of his brother, he shrank from carrying her off by force. To bring himself more in her way, which he thought would advance his designs, he gave her daughter in marriage to his son ; thus uniting the two families by closer ties, and removing those barriers which Eastern jealousy opposed to familiar intercourse. But Artanyte—such was the name of the younger princess—

was not animated by the virtuous principles of her mother, and she soon contrived to attract the attentions of Xerxes to herself, though the busy scandal of the court persisted in giving them to the wife of Masistes. At this critical juncture, Queen Amestris presented Xerxes with a large, various-coloured, and sumptuous mantle, which she had woven with her own hands ; the fatal garment was seen by Artanyte, who, to annoy Amestris, begged it as a gift from the King, and imprudently appeared with it in public. The Queen, not suspecting any ill-will on the part of Artanyte, supposed that this unprovoked insult had been contrived by her mother, to show her power over Xerxes ; but, concealing her resentment, she waited patiently till the King gave his birthday feast, at which it was customary for him to grant any request she might make, and then, to his horror, asked him to give her the wife of Masistes. In vain the monarch tried to evade her request, offering, like Herod, whatever other gift she might choose, even to the half of his kingdom : the inexorable Queen coveted nothing so much as vengeance, and that was now in her power. Having seized the virtuous and innocent princess, she had her conveyed into the interior of the palace ; and there, summoning the royal guards, subjected her to the most cruel mutilation, chopping off her nose and her breasts, and cutting out her tongue, which she threw to the dogs, and then sent the wretched lady home to her husband. Masistes, maddened by the treatment she had received, sought redress by arms, and endeavouring to excite an insurrection against the King, was killed in the attempt.

These intermarriages of the royal family continued to foster domestic unhappiness, and great social crimes, in every generation ; and so late as the time of the great

Mithridates, we find that monarch, whose arms had advanced him to the empire of Asia, struggling with similar influences, and finally perishing through the infamous disloyalty of one of his children.

Besides his renowned son, Mithridates the First left two daughters, both of whom, according to a custom very prevalent in Asia, bore the name of Laodice. One became the wife of her brother, the great warrior; the other, shortly after the accession of the latter to the throne, was given in marriage to the King of Cappadocia. The career of each furnished melancholy evidence of the impolicy and infelicity of such compulsory unions. Mithridates soon left his young wife to go on a tour in disguise through Asia Minor; but after an absence of some months, returned in time to share in the great public festivities on the birth of an heir to his crown. His Queen, however, had in the mean time tasted the sweets of power, and secretly formed other connexions, by which she was now urged to engage in a conspiracy for the assassination of her husband, and the usurpation of his throne. A similar design was conceived by her sister, the Queen of Cappadocia, who, aided by the cabals of an Eastern palace, successfully carried out her object, and, for a time, retained the government. But the wife of Mithridates, though not wanting in supporters, had to contend with more formidable obstacles: the conspiracy was discovered, the guilt of the miserable Queen established, and, after a formal examination, she was condemned to death.

It was some time after these tragic events that Mithridates, while holding his court at Stratonica, contracted a marriage with the beautiful and accomplished Hypsicrates, a spouse worthy of his virtues, and who offers an eminent example of what can be effected by a noble and magnani-

mous woman. This gifted princess possessed the entire affection of her husband, to whom she was romantically attached, insomuch that she cheerfully shared the dangers and fatigues of his hazardous expeditions, and no doubt influenced him, by her example and aspirations, in his heroic struggles with Rome. On the defeat of Mithridates by Lucullus, in the mountain-passes of the Crimea, she showed her love for him in a signal manner, proving how well she deserved, by her superior qualities, the preference he uniformly displayed for her. The ruined monarch had sent a message to the ladies of the court from the field of battle, enjoining them rather to die than fall into the hands of the Romans ; and so completely were they fascinated by his splendid character, that only one of the number, probably a stranger, repined at her fate. The others desired the messenger, if he should ever again see the King, to thank him for his care of them, and then put an end to their existence—a shocking proof of the barbarity exercised towards their sex in those days, and which they expected to experience from the Romans. But Hypsicrates, though not fearing death, could not reconcile herself to a separation from Mithridates ; and, mounting a fleet horse, she succeeded, after incredible exertions, and a narrow escape from the enemy, in overtaking him ; when her presence restored his hopes and his energy. In a subsequent engagement on the banks of the Euphrates, she appeared in arms, dressed as a soldier, and mounted on a superb Persian charger, in the ranks of his guards, and fought by his side through the whole of the bloody day. When the royal army was seized with a panic, she placed herself with her undaunted husband at the head of eight hundred chosen men, and cut her way through the heavy-armed legions of Pompey. But the power of Mithridates was now for a time broken, and he

was obliged to tear himself from his faithful followers, and seek safety in an obscure retreat. Accompanied only by his lovely wife, he pursued his way over rugged mountain-paths, or across inhospitable deserts, an outcast and a fugitive, receiving from the devoted Hypsicrates more attention and consideration than when he sat on his throne. In his service the incomparable Queen could undergo any hardship, or perform the most menial office, and every night she carefully groomed his horse, and accoutred it for his use in the morning. Such was her devotion that, even in this depth of his adversity, Mithridates exclaimed that he should never cease to be a king, so long as he possessed Hypsicrates.

Hypsicrates was not destined to be present at his death ; but in that bitter hour, when he was betrayed by those whom he most trusted, under circumstances of the blackest treachery, two of his daughters, Mithradata and Nissa, evinced the fidelity and devotedness of woman, and, by the voluntary sacrifice of their lives, shared his last agonies. The great monarch, by one of those prodigious efforts which astonished and confounded his enemies, had again assembled a numerous army, and was marching into Europe, intending to cross the Alps into Italy, when his son Pharnaces raised a sedition among the troops, and persuaded them to revolt. In the middle of the night, Mithridates was aroused by a cry of "Pharnaces is King," and hardly had time to fly with his daughters from the camp, and take refuge in the neighbouring mountains. Then he perceived that the crisis of his fortunes had arrived, and drawing from his vest a vial of poison, with which he was always provided, he would have drunk off the deadly potion, but was prevented by his daughters, who with tears and entreaties, claimed the right of dying first. Their request was granted, and the princesses soon

expired, while Mithridates, becoming impatient at the slow operation of the poison, threw himself on the sword of his freedman, and thus closed his career.

These incidents serve to illustrate the light value which the Persians, and the nations dependent on, and in alliance with them, set on the lives of women ; and the same sentiments still prevail in many parts of the East. When the Persian army sacked a town, the women were often inhumanly butchered ; and the horrible atrocities perpetrated by Chosroes and Sapor, who sat on the throne of Cyrus during the inglorious decline of the Roman empire, make us blush for our species. From time immemorial, if a Persian of any rank committed a crime, his punishment was inflicted equally on his wives ; and Daniel mentions that the innocent wives of his enemies were thrown, together with their husbands and children, into the lions' den, by the special command of Darius. That great King, however, occasionally relaxed the rigour of the law, and an instance of his clemency is recorded in the case of the wife of Intaphernes, one of the seven princes, who, by their conspiracy against Smerdis the Impostor, seated Darius on the throne. Intaphernes, presuming on this great service, presented himself at the palace, and insisted on entering the royal presence unannounced, but was prevented by the doorkeepers, and, enraged at their opposition, he drew his scimitar, and cut off their noses and ears, which he strung on the bridle of his horse, and then tied in derision round their necks. The mutilated domestics hastened to implore vengeance from the King, who was exasperated alike by the outrage and the insult, and, without further inquiry, commanded Intaphernes and his wife, with their children and all their relations, to be instantly led to execution. But the agonizing cries of the innocent lady, as she passed the

gates of the palace, reached the ear of the monarch ; and, touched by her miserable fate, he sent a reprieve for herself, at the same time granting a pardon to any one of the others whom she should select. She gave the preference to her brother, which so surprised Darius, that on learning the fact, he sent a chamberlain to her with the following message :—" Lady, the King inquires the reason why, leaving your husband and children, you have chosen that your brother should survive, as he is not so near related to you as your children, and less endeared to you than your husband." To which the unhappy woman replied : " O King ! I may have another husband, if God will, and other children, if I lose these ; but as my father and mother are no more, I cannot have another brother ; and therefore I have chosen him before them all "—a speech, we are told, which so pleased the despot, that he granted her also the life of her eldest son.

In all ages the Persians regarded women in the light of chattels, without rights, without natural sympathies, without feelings. In a treaty concluded by Chosroes with the Romans, it was stipulated that he should receive from Byzantium the annual tribute of a thousand virgins ; and this imperious tyrant imprisoned within the walls of his palace no less than three thousand wives. But Nature, insulted and outraged, defied his power, and made his very passions minister to her revenge. Woman he might enslave, trample upon, sacrifice—her hand and person he might secure—but the sanctuary of her heart, the holy refuge of her affections, was beyond his reach. Rome had presented him with the lovely and pious Shirene, who, by her matchless beauty, her rare graces, talents, and accomplishments, brought even him to understand that there is a spirituality in woman's nature, more potent and more captivating than mere personal attractions, let these

be ever so striking. But Shirene, while she was forced to share his throne, rejected his love : the great King grasped her hand, but her heart was given to a slave ; and all the devotion of Chosroes, all the diversions and pleasures his ingenuity could contrive, or power and treasures command, never tempted her to smile.

Nor was this the worst evil brought upon him by his utter disregard of the ties and natural instincts of humanity. Conjugal affection is the fruitful germ of filial duty ; and when we despise the one, we virtually relinquish the other. The sons of the tyrant's different wives viewed each other with the bitterest hatred, and, as they grew up, their mutual jealousies found a new object in their father, who, at length, was seized and deposed by his son Siroes, thrown into a dungeon, starved, tortured, and finally put to death, after eighteen of his children had been murdered before his eyes. The usurper, having thus sated his cruelty, rushed into the presence of Shirene, for whom he had conceived a guilty passion, and claimed her as his bride and Queen. The ill-fated beauty asked first to be shown the corpse of Chosroes, which still lay, gashed and bloody, in an obscure apartment of the palace, and being conducted to the spot, she plunged a dagger into her breast, and fell lifeless on the same bier.

Polygamy, which the ancient laws of the Medes not only permitted to every class, but actually enforced, was undoubtedly, as in the case of Shirene, the unvarying cause of the misery of Persian women, and of the dissensions and internal discords of families. Marriages were also contracted at a tender age, before the mind had acquired any perception of the moral nature or the obligations of such a union, and this was a fertile source of domestic unhappiness. The children of one wife were arrayed in enmity against the children of another, and frequently

conspired to effect the ruin of a favoured consort, or even to take the life of their father. Nor could the sternest authority smother the resentments and rivalries which continually grew out of a system wholly at variance with the fundamental laws of nature.

The marriages of the Medes were consecrated by a curious ceremony. The plighted pair, in the presence of their mutual relatives and friends, made an incision in each other's arms, and mingled their blood, which was received into a goblet, and drunk as a pledge of harmony, by the bride and bridegroom. The nuptials were then registered, and celebrated by a feast, extending over several days.

Divorce, considered but a trifling punishment among the ancients, could be obtained on the slightest grounds. Sometimes it was dictated by mere caprice, or by personal dislike; and any unprincipled reprobate could discard his wife at pleasure. A custom prevails to this day among the Persians, when they are going to battle, of conditionally divorcing their wives, numbers declaring that the divorce shall take effect unless they return victorious.

The marriages of the modern Persians retain many of the usages practised by their earliest forefathers. When the union is agreed on, the intended husband, or his father—if he has not arrived at an independent age,—settles a dower upon the lady, proportioned to her rank in life; and the ring is sent in due form, and presents interchanged between the two families. The day before the wedding the bride anoints herself, and stains her hands with a red dye, made of henna; and the next morning she is bathed, perfumed, and dressed in her most sumptuous apparel. She then sits in state, on a rich cushion, and receives offerings from her family and her female acquaintance. This ceremony concluded, she is enveloped in a

scarlet veil, and mounted on horseback, when a procession of horsemen, with the young girls and women of the family, and their friends, convey her, with joyous shouts and music, to the dwelling of the bridegroom. The happy swain, attired in all the finery he can buy or borrow, receives her at the threshold, and conducts her into the house, where he has already assembled his friends, two of whom, if he is either very young or very bashful, act as his deputies, and divert the company with a thousand tricks, often played off at the expense of some of their guests, but which, on such occasions, no one is disposed to resent. The proceedings close with a feast, and, when the parties are wealthy, this is often protracted over thirty or forty days, and always continues for three.

The ceremonies, strictly followed in towns, slightly vary among the wandering nomade tribes, who dwell in tents, and celebrate their nuptials in the dreary solitudes of the desert. As the bride is being conducted in solemn silence from the tent of her mother to her future home, she is met about midway by the bridegroom, who carries in his hand an orange or an apple, and, when sufficiently near to make sure of his aim, throws it at the veiled maiden with all his force, as the harder he hits her, the more fortunate she will be esteemed. Instantly the lady's friends raise a great outcry, and make a rush at the ungallant bridegroom, who spurs off, and, being mounted on the fleetest horse of his tribe, generally contrives to outstrip his pursuers, and arrive first at his tent. Should he, however, be overtaken, his horse becomes the prize of his captor, though, if he is in poor circumstances, it may be redeemed for two or three pieces of silver. When the bride reaches the tent of the sham recreant, the girls and women of her party, clinging round her horse, implore her not to alight, while the friends of the bridegroom are

equally importunate on the other side, though they blend their invitations with urgent entreaties that she will relinquish a portion of her dower. To this she seldom consents, as it is her only safeguard from ill-usage ; but sometimes, with the confiding weakness of her sex, she readily complies. Then she descends from her horse, and, amidst the renewed opposition of her friends, takes the fatal step of entering the tent—to her indeed the house of bondage.

VII.

INDIA.

INDIA—the land of the enervated Hindoo—has in all ages been considered the gem of Asia. Poetry and fiction have united with history to celebrate the fertility of her soil, the endless variety of her productions, the profusion of her mineral wealth, and the diversity, grandeur, and beauty of her scenery. Traversed by mighty rivers—the Indus, the Ganges, and the Hoogley—flanked by the cloud-capped chain of the Himalayas, whose awful peaks are swept by perpetual tempests—embracing immense valleys, and vast plains, which, if not clothed with primeval forests, teem with rich and varied produce—and paved, beneath the fruitful ground, with the precious metals, or still more precious jewels, it might justly be pronounced the garden of the earth. Here nature had scattered her bounty around with a prodigal and unsparing hand. Far from its shores the mariner inhaled the balmy odour of its spices ; and the merchants of Tyre and Tarshish, descending the Arabian Gulf, or crossing the arid deserts of Persia, dispersed over the world, from the earliest

times, the multifarious fruits and products of its soil, with the gold of its rivers and the delicate silk of its looms. Nor were stranger features wanting to heighten the effect of the picture. The wide frontier of India, where nature had placed the Indus as a moat, or the inaccessible Himalayas as a rampart, was guarded by a host of elephants, each bearing on his huge back a tower, garrisoned by armed men; its cities extended for miles, and inclosed within their walls of jasper and granite, marble palaces, and temples endowed with fabulous treasures; and, to this day, the fiercest beasts of the forest roam at will through its wilds, its jungles, and its mountains.

The early history of this great peninsula, like that of most countries, is enshrouded in the mists of fable, and no reliance can be placed on the archives of such celestial potentates as the Kings of the Sun and the Kings of the Moon. These, however, yield us, amidst heaps of fiction, some grains of truth, and the Scriptural student is interested to find, in the maze of Indian history, a tradition that the whole earth was once submerged by a deluge, by which every living thing was destroyed. The world is said to have been re-peopled by the god Brumhæ, who divided himself into two parts, one of which became Swayumbhoovi, the Hindoo Noah, and the other his wife. The Védés, which records these facts, is the earliest chronicle of the Hindoos, and is supposed to have been commenced in the time of King David, or about a thousand years before the Christian era. But our first authentic information respecting Hindostan commences with the reign of Mahmid, Sultan of Ghuzni, who hurled the bolt of Mohammedan conquest at its tottering thrones. The peninsula, extending from the extremity of Persia to the Southern Ocean, was then divided among tribes of Raiputs, who held their fiefs by feudal tenure,

involving military service at the call of the sovereign ; but such undisciplined and inexperienced forces were ill adapted to repel the warlike Affghans, animated as they were by religious zeal, burning with the hopes of plunder, and marching under the banner of a victorious leader. They were speedily routed ; and Mahmid, eager to extend the Mohammedan sway, next invaded the territories of Jeipal, the Brahmin ruler of Lahore. Jeipal was vanquished, and, conscious that his fortunes were irretrievable, erected a funeral pile, and threw himself into the flames. Mahmid, by disarming and decimating the people, secured his conquest, and then turned his arms against the neighbouring kingdoms. But it would be tedious, as well as irrelevant, to enumerate his successive expeditions, which were all marked by the same revolting barbarity ; and wherever he advanced, towns were sacked, temples destroyed, women and children butchered ; and in his last campaign, the number of his captives was so great, that the price of a strong man, sold into slavery, was only ten drachms, or about five English shillings.

The great achievement of Mahmid was the capture of the temple of Somnath, one of the twelve Singas or Phalli, esteemed the holiest sanctuaries of India. It was situated in Gujarik, and water was brought to this place, which was far in the interior, from the distant Ganges, that the idols might have the satisfaction of being dipped daily in their favourite stream. The temple, though a Pantheon in principle, containing all the gods of the Hindoo calendar, was especially dedicated to Siva, by his title of Swayam Nath, or Self-Existent, and was endowed with the revenues of ten thousand villages. It was held in the greatest reverence by the superstitious Hindoos, and priests devoted their daughters to the abominable service of the shrine. Mahmid, undaunted by the diffi-

culties and dangers of the enterprise, made his way over mountains, and across inhospitable deserts, to the sacred precincts ; and after a faint struggle, became master of the pile, as well as of its untold treasures, said to surpass the wildest dreams of fiction. With this spoil, he carried off the massive gates of the edifice, the recovery of which by General Nott, in 1842, elicited from Lord Ellenborough, then Governor-General of India, the celebrated manifesto, which was so severely censured in England.

The dark mythology of the Hindoos includes whole legions of gods ; and the Rev. W. Ward, from whose account of the national customs, before they were affected by European intercourse, I have derived much information, estimates their total number at three hundred and thirty millions, though all these are resolvable, in some way or other, into three principal idols ; Vishnoo, Shiva, and Brúmha ; into the three goddesses, Doorgu, Lúkoh-mēē, and Sūrūswū ; and into the elements. Monkeys, trees, and logs of wood, distinguished by special peculiarities, have also been made objects of worship, and received the senseless prayers of this benighted and besotted people.

Women, ever the first prey of idolatry, largely participate in the religious ceremonies. At the temple of Juggernaut, they enact all the horrible atrocities which the Holy Scriptures describe as the ancient ritual of Moloch ; and when the monstrous idol is brought out of its den, to proceed in triumph through the streets, they are encouraged by the Brahmins to throw themselves under the huge wheels of his car, where they are crushed to pieces. Numbers annually devote themselves to Brúmha, by plunging into the sacred waters of the Ganges. Allahabad, on the banks of that river, is a consecrated spot, and has been polluted by these suicidal

sacrifices from time immemorial. A bevy of women here enter a boat accompanied by a Brahmin, who, as they shove off from the shore, slings over the shoulder of each an earthen pan, and then assists them into the stream, holding them up till the pan, being turned aside, fills with water, when he relinquishes his grasp, and the poor victims speedily sink. Formerly thousands of women perished annually through these revolting superstitions.

The Mohammedan power, introduced by Mahmud of Ghuzni, was ultimately established at Delhi, the capital of Hindostan, a city of great extent and magnificence; but the descendants of Mahmud were not allowed to remain in quiet possession of their ill-acquired empire; and, during the reign of Allah-ed-din-Khilji, hordes of Moguls, fired by the exploits of Zenghis Khan, poured over the frontier, advancing their dreaded banner to the very gates of Delhi. Here, however, they were met and defeated by the Emperor's general, the celebrated Zaffir Khan, who himself fell in the moment of victory, after slaying with his own hand a prodigious number of the enemy. The latter, indeed, were so impressed with his prowess, that they made it the subject of a proverb; and, for ages after the battle, if the horse of a Mogul started, or evinced any alarm, its master would exclaim—"How now! do you see Zaffir Khan?"

The invasion of Tamerlane, or Timour the Lame—so called from a personal defect—inundated India with the blood of her children. This sanguinary monster, who has been depicted by the poets as a paragon of clemency, laid Delhi in ruins, levelled cities and temples with the ground, turned the fairest provinces of the empire into deserts, and, on one occasion, slaughtered no less than a hundred thousand captives. From India he swept like a whirlwind over the neighbouring territories, and in every

direction left the same fell traces of desolation and blood.

The women of Hindostan suffered severely from the invasion of Tamerlane ; but that of Nadir Shah, King of Persia, justly called the Scourge of India, almost swept them from the earth. The march of the haughty conqueror was checked for a moment by the walls of Cabul, the gate of the peninsula, where Shirza Khan, an officer of great resolution and experience, commanded the forces of the Emperor of Delhi ; but Nadir, having bought over Nazir Khan, Shirza's nephew, who was encamped without the walls, succeeded by a stratagem in entering the city. Nazir represented to his uncle that his movements were embarrassed by the women attached to the army, from a fear of their being captured by the enemy, and desired Shirza, for the sake of humanity, as well as for the relief of his troops, to afford them an asylum within the walls. This was readily agreed to by the Khan, and Nazir escorted the women into Cabul, just as the Shah, pursuant to a preconcerted arrangement, sent a message to Shirza, inviting him to a conference. While the unsuspecting general was thus engaged, Nazir threw open the gates to the invading army, and thus laid the whole of India at the feet of the perfidious Shah.

The treatment experienced by the sex during this irruption threw the ordinary horrors of war into the shade. Every instinct of humanity was outraged, every tie of nature rent ; and the blood of woman, of old and young alike, flowed like water. At the capture of Delhi, the Hindoos themselves destroyed their wives and daughters, to prevent their falling into the hands of the Persians ; and these ill-fated women were burnt alive in their apartments, their husbands, as soon as they had kindled the fire, perishing with them in the flames.

The empire of Hindostan was first consolidated by Zehir-ed-din Mohammed, surnamed Baber the Tiger, King of Samarcand and Bokhara. This intrepid prince, left an orphan in his youth, was ignominiously driven from the throne of his ancestors, and after a life of the most romantic adventures, succeeded in gathering round him a band of daring freebooters, at whose head he marched five times over the frontiers of India. Ultimately he established himself at Delhi, and, subduing the adjacent provinces, founded the dynasty of the Great Mogul, which derived that name from a tradition, long since refuted, that one of the remote ancestors of Baber was a Mongolian chief.

Delhi, for ages the seat of empire, stood on the precipitous banks of the Jumna. Its stately palaces and lofty towers, its mosques and temples, interspersed with gardens and groves of trees, extended over an area of thirty miles, and the whole was surrounded by a battlemented wall, pierced by numerous gates. Imagination fails to convey an adequate idea of this magnificent city, as it appeared in the zenith of its fame, when the full glory of an Indian sun, there not without worshippers, looked down on its thousand minarets and gilded cupolas, just rising above the walls, and shed a glad radiance on the mighty obelisks of red granite, the graceful columns of marble, and the fresh, clear fountains which presented themselves on every side. The palace of the great Emperor in the centre of the city, realized the descriptions of Oriental romance. Floors of mosaic, columns of spotless marble, walls inlaid with silver and gold, ceilings emblazoned with all the hues of the rainbow, or disappearing, at an incredible height, in an expansive aerial dome, exhibited the beau ideal of Eastern art, in all its

diversity of aspects, and the spectator concurred eagerly in the inscription on the frieze—

“ If there be an Elysium on earth,
It is this, it is this ! ”

Such was the structure in which the potent Akhbar Khan immured his five thousand wives, selected from all the greatest families of Asia, and condemned, by the inexorable cruelty of man, to pass their lives in this superb prison. It was surrounded by extensive gardens and pleasure-grounds, traversed by avenues of acacias and labyrinthine walks, overshadowed by the dark salvadora, the exuberant banyan, or intertwining date-trees ; and every rare plant and flower lent its attractions to the scene. An artificial lake diffused itself in numberless little channels through every part of the garden, here flowing tranquilly on, there falling in a cascade, or rising in a fountain, while a majestic plantain flung its shade over the bank, where a pavilion of enamelled tiles, or a secluded grotto, invited the rambler to repose. Nature, indeed, conspired with art to reconcile the fair captives to their fate ; but in this barbaric Eden the very garlands were chains, and doubtless many a lovely prisoner felt the same emotions as Rasselas in the Happy Valley.

Here it was that the beautiful daughter of Aurungezebe, the Lalla Rookh of Moore, spent the sunny years of her youth, jealously watched by that most vigilant of chamberlains, the Argus-eyed Fadladeen. To this sacred retreat came the gallant young King of Bokhara, when he sought the princess's hand, proclaiming, by his words and presence, that neither walls nor chamberlains could shut in the fame of her beauty, while no distance could deter him from offering his love. And it was from the

gate of these enchanting gardens that the innocent Lalla, now a betrothed bride, departed in grand state, for the blissful vale of Kashmere, surrounded by her bevy of maidens in their rose-coloured veils and flowing silks, and escorted by all the beauty and all the chivalry of the imperial city.

The strict seclusion in which Hindoo ladies were kept, as well by the laws of caste as by the jealousy of their husbands, and their utter separation from all the affairs of life, necessarily opposed an almost insurmountable barrier to their appearance on the field of history. Their influence, when they possessed any, was exerted in private, in the recesses of the palace, or the sealed chambers of the harem ; and we are told of a Begum, or widowed Queen, haranguing the courtiers from behind a curtain in favour of her infant son. Nevertheless, the mind and heart of woman, rising above the difficulties of her situation, more than once overcame every obstacle, and advanced her to the summit of power. Durgautti, Queen of Gurrah, a state comprising the richest portion of the Deccan, succeeded to the throne of her husband, and, by her wise government, raised her people and kingdom to the highest pitch of prosperity. Seventy thousand towns acknowledged the benign sway of this lovely and accomplished woman, who personally superintended the direction of affairs, the management of the finances, and the administration of justice. At length, her growing power excited the apprehensions of Akhbar Khan, as her wealth, and that of her subjects, fostered and protected by just laws, provoked the cupidity of his generals ; and Asaph Khan was despatched with a large army to subdue her dominions. The heroic Queen placed herself at the head of her warriors ; and exchanging her diadem for a helmet, and her sceptre for a lance,

hastened to meet him in the field. Her eager soldiers were so stimulated by her example, that they advanced too hastily to the attack, and were falling out of line, when Durgautti, perceiving their disorder, with the greatest coolness ordered a halt, reformed her ranks, and enjoined the impatient troops to march on slowly, and await the signal to engage from the royal howdah. The battle was long and obstinate, but ultimately the intrepidity and genius of the Queen, who threw herself into the front of the conflict, was signally victorious; and Asaph was repulsed with great slaughter. The number of the slain, indeed, actually struck a panic into the victors, and Durgautti was prevented by their fears from following up her success, and in the night was deserted by her vizier and principal officers. Still she maintained her ground; and when Asaph, reinforced by his artillery, and apprised of her weakened condition, advanced in the morning to renew the battle, she was the first to rush upon the enemy. At the same time, her son, Raja Reir Shaw, made a gallant charge by her side, and fell mortally wounded; which the Queen perceiving, was giving orders for his removal to the rear, when her soldiers, dismayed by his fate, fled in a body, leaving her almost alone. Her eye was now pierced by an arrow, which she tried to draw out; but the shaft, instead of yielding to her efforts, broke off at the end, leaving the steel barb in the wound; and at this moment another arrow passed through her neck, which she succeeded in extracting; but a mist seemed to gather round her, her brain whirled, and she dropped fainting into the bottom of the howdah. Her elephant was driven by Adlar, a brave officer, who, while she lay insensible, singly repulsed numbers of the enemy; but perceiving that the day was irretrievable, he urged the Queen, as she rallied, to permit him to secure her

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safety by flight. Durgautti, however, indignantly rejected the proposal. "It is true," she exclaimed, in resolute accents, "we are overcome in war, but shall we ever be vanquished in honour? No! Let your dagger save me from the crime of putting a period to my own existence!" Adlar, with tears, besought her to change her resolution, but the desperate Queen seized his weapon, and plunged it into her bosom.

The great obstacles to the development of the female character among the Hindoos, as well in the present age as in times past, are idolatrous rites, the utter neglect of education, early marriages, polygamy, seclusion from social life, and the stringent laws of caste. These last have ever been, and are still, the bane of India. The castes are four in number—namely, the Brahmin, the Kshuktriyu, the Voishyu, and the Shoodru; but all these are again divided, and each subdivision, while it increases the confusion, is still distinct. Hindoo mythology regards the Brahmins as an emanation from the mouth of Brúmha; the Kshuktriyus it traces to his arms; the Voishyus to his thigh; and the unfortunate Shoodrus, comprehending the meanest of the people, to his feet. The Brahmins, as the inventors of the system, naturally claim the most honourable origin; and they have also appropriated to themselves every honourable and every profitable function.

These crafty and wicked priests have contrived to fasten their withering influence on the whole fabric of Hindoo society, so as to make a prey of every individual and every incident. A birth, a marriage, or a funeral, a feast or a wake, calamities or successes, sicknesses, recovery, or death, the changes of the weather, droughts, or inundations—all are pronounced occasions for the intrusion of a Brahmin, for the recital of his prayers, and

the imposition of his fee. Fortunate the man whose name is odorous in the nostrils of a Brahmin ; and the poor Shoodru, instead of coveting luxuries for himself, envies his rich neighbour more for his power to feed so many Brahmins ; exclaiming " Blessed Kshuktriyu ! he can regale three or five Brahmins," as the case may be.

A Brahmin's child becomes the object of superstitious observances even before he enters the world. On an appointed day, the mother expectant, attended by her female relations, anoints herself with turmeric, braids her long tresses, pares her nails, paints the sides of her feet, and then takes a bath. Meanwhile the husband offers a burnt sacrifice to Brúmha ; and on his wife's reappearance, they seat themselves side by side, on a bench which the women of the family, conformably to an immemorial custom, have decorated for the occasion. The household idol is now produced, and the officiating Brahmin utters incantations, which are repeated by the husband, who, as a testimony of his devotion, makes the senseless image an offering of water and butter. He then resumes his seat, and, murmuring a prayer, feeds his wife with milk and some sprouts of vatu, and the ceremony concludes with an oblation to the idol, which is poured on the ground by a woman.

The Brahmins, after remaining for ages an entire caste, were divided by Bullalsendi, a Voidi king, into three orders—namely, Koolenus, Shrotryus, and Vungokujus ; and a glance at the regulations of these several subdivisions will show what effect such a system must have on the social position of woman. A Koolenu, or Brahmin of the first class, can only marry his daughter in his own order ; and if no suitable husband can be procured, she must remain unmarried. To prevent this result, which is considered a reproach, one Koolenu usually marries a

number of young women in his own order, some of whom he never removes from their father's house. The sons of Koolenus, indeed, are in such request as husbands, that they are usually pre-engaged from infancy, while their daughters, however richly endowed, can procure only a share of a husband as an extraordinary favour. A Koolenu who has one daughter is esteemed both fortunate and distinguished ; but a family of daughters is considered a dishonour ; and hence, even in the most civilized parts of India, infanticide prevails to an awful extent. But though a Koolenu lady may not marry out of her class, the men are at liberty to form what alliances they please ; and a Koolenu Lothario, after playing havoc among the ladies of his own order, may sell his precious remains at a high premium to the daughter of a Shrotryu, who deems herself highly honoured by such an illustrious connexion. The same arbitrary rules extend to the other subdivisions, and in an equal degree, to the three lay castes, which have their bounds fixed with undiminished precision.

The Oodwahu-tutuvri, a work on the civil and canon law of the Hindoos, enumerates eight kinds of espousals as legitimate. The first is called Bramha, when the maiden is presented as a free gift to a Brahmin, which, of course, is esteemed the most auspicious and most desirable union ; Doivii ranks next, and indicates a marriage with a Brahmin at the termination of a sacrifice ; the third, styled Arshii, refers to a bride purchased from her father for two cows—certainly not an exorbitant price ; Prajapilityi, the fourth in order, describes a bridegroom who has been so fortunate as to secure the recommendation of a Brahmin ; the fifth, Asvorū, is a money transaction ; the sixth, Gaudhurvū, intimates that the contract has been brought about by the mutual agreement of the two families concerned ; Rakshūsū, the seventh, stigmatizes

the bride as a slave ; and Poishushu, the eighth and last, pronounces her to have been a victim.

The advice given in the sacred pages of the Shastru, as to the selection of a wife, breathes the national sentiment on this important subject. " Let a person choose for his wife," says the reverend scribe, " a maid, whose form has no defect, who has an agreeable name, who walks gracefully like a young elephant, whose hair is moderate in quantity, and whose teeth are of reasonable size." Not a word is said of mental endowments ; and, indeed, a Hindoo has yet to discover, by his own elevation, those most potent attractions of woman.

The Hindoo notion of beauty differs materially, as well as morally, from the European standard, and evinces the same distortion and perversion of nature. All the points are dexterously summed up in a description of Shurida, the daughter of Brumha. " This girl," says the Hindoo chronicler, " was of a yellow colour, and had a nose like the flower of resamum ; her legs were taper like the plantain-tree ; her eyes large like the principal leaf of the lotus ; her eyebrows extended to her ears ; her lips were red, and like the young leaves of the mango-tree ; her face was like the full moon ; her voice like the sound of the cuckoo ; her arms reached to her knees ; her throat was like that of a pigeon ; her loins narrow like those of a lion ; her hair hung in curls down to her feet ; her teeth were like the seeds of the pomegranate ; and her walk like that of a drunken elephant or a goose !"

The women of Hindostan, like those of most Eastern countries, paint the eyelids, and dye and pencil the eyebrows. These are considered essential characteristics of beauty. The practice of anointing, too, of which such frequent mention is made in the Holy Scriptures, prevails among all classes. At domestic festivals and gatherings,

the women of the house anoint their female guests, and even braid their hair, pencil their brows, and sprinkle them with costly perfumes, while barbers of their own sex, found in every hamlet, pare and trim their nails. On other occasions, they go the round of the village, bearing alternately lamps and empty basins, in which they receive oil for the Brahmin ; and returning home, they are entertained with music, and the evening concludes with a religious ceremony.

Hindoo marriages are usually negotiated by a professional matchmaker, called a ghutuku, who is regularly trained for the office. The principal qualifications seem to consist of the arts of flattering and lying, as the chief object of a ghutuku, when engaged in bringing about a marriage, is to impose on both his employers. Sometimes he proposes a match himself, before the parents of the implicated parties have given the subject a thought ; and the overture is rarely ill-received. A girl, if born of wealthy parents, is often married in infancy ; but the ordinary age of a bride is eight, ten, or twelve years. After the ceremony has been performed, she continues to reside with her father for two or three years, during which time, as frequently happens, her betrothed husband may die, and in that case she is condemned to perpetual widowhood. At best, she may never be claimed by her husband, or be allowed to remain under the paternal roof ; and, indeed, a Koolenu lady never leaves the house of her father.

Three days before the nuptials, the bride is anointed, and her female relations present her with a small box of dye, used for tinging the eyes, which she retains in her hand, day and night, till the ceremony is completed. The evening before the marriage she is visited by the bridegroom, who sets out from the house of his father in a

palanquin, preceded by coolies, bearing long rods, often of massive silver ; and surrounded by attendants, who ventilate the luxurious vehicle with a fan, made of the tail of a Tartar cow. Flags and music follow, with open carriages, containing dancing-girls and singers ; and fireworks are discharged, while attendants illuminate the street with links and flambeaux. As the procession approaches the abode of the bride's father, it is met by her family, who, with joyous shouts, conduct the bridegroom into the house, where he is stripped of his ordinary attire, and dressed in sumptuous clothes, adorned for the occasion. The bride, who has been waiting in an inner room, is then brought forth, and the old garments of the bridegroom are thrown over her own, when they both stand up on stools, opposite to each other, and the bridegroom is permitted to look for the first time at the face of his bride. This is the prelude to several childish ceremonies, after which the officiating Brahmin, amidst the profound silence of the company, holds the hand of the bridegroom over a pan of water, and places on it the hand of the bride, linking them together with a wreath of flowers. At the same time, the father of the bride, exclaims—"Of the family of A. (or whatever the patronymic may be), the great-granddaughter of B., the granddaughter of C., the daughter of D., wearing such and such clothes and jewels, I, F., give to thee G. as thy wife." The bridegroom replies—"I have received her." On this acknowledgment the Brahmin stepping before the others, ties the wedded pair together by their garments, and the ghutuku recites passages from the Mishra, thus concluding the solemnity.

The next day is devoted to the wedding feast. In the morning, both families, from the first break of dawn, alarm the neighbourhood with discordant noises, and a

drum is beaten without intermission, summoning all their relatives and acquaintance. As the day advances, the bridegroom sends the bride a present of eatables, usually such delicacies as fish, birds, clarified butter, and betel; and, in some cases, plantain and sweetmeats, which the lady receives through her friends, as a pledge of his affection. In the afternoon they have to submit to the operation of having their heads shaved, and night witnesses the grand procession, in which the bridegroom, dressed in sumptuous apparel, is escorted to the nuptial banquet. This, as already described, forcibly illustrates the beautiful parables of Our Saviour and the description of the marriage at Cana of Galilee, the guests, like the governor of the Gospel feast, who cavilled at the miraculous supply of wine, being permitted to complain of whatever is set before them, and frequently stretching this privilege so far, that the banquet ends in a pitched battle.

Notwithstanding the brutality with which Hindoo women are treated, and the iniquitous and debasing character of the marriage laws, in no country have the sex evinced more devoted affection for their husbands, or a higher sense of conjugal duty. The horrid rites of idolatry, the wicked devices of superstition, the monotony of a secluded life, and a long course of barbarous usage, have, in their case, failed to deface, however they might distort, the beautiful lineaments of the female character, and almost every action of their lives attests an abnegation of self. It is indeed lamentable to reflect that in them the best feelings of nature, designed by the Divine Hand in beneficence and love, have been perverted to the worst purposes; and, instead of proving a blessing to others, have operated as a curse on themselves.

. The protecting arm of the East-India Company, gradu-

ally extending its influence, has interposed with effect to ameliorate this system, and the wholesale slaughter of female infants has now received a severe check, while the revolting custom of suttee, though still practised in the native kingdoms, is altogether forbidden in British India. This is one of the most diabolical inventions of the Brahmins, and exhibits fanaticism in its most shocking phase. The stricken and desolate widow, often in the flower of her youth and the first blush of her beauty, is the self-devoted victim of the sacrifice, blindly condemning herself to a dreadful and lingering death. The Brahmin seizes the moment of her distraction, when grief and superstition show everything in the darkest colours, to incite her to share the funeral pile of her husband, and she perishes in the flames which consume his corpse. To add, if possible, to the horror of the spectacle, the hand that kindles the fire must be her own son's.

Captain Kemp, an officer in the service of the Company, describes a touching instance of suttee, of which he was an eye-witness, and which occurred at Gondui-paru, about twenty miles from Calcutta, in March, 1813. In this case, the victim, who was the widow of a young Hindoo artificer, and only in her sixteenth year, was instigated to bury herself alive with the decaying corpse ; and all the entreaties of the European residents could not shake her purpose. Her mother was humanely urged to interpose ; but so completely were the feelings of nature silenced by the voice of superstition, that she resigned herself, without an effort, to the revolting sacrifice, exclaiming that it was her daughter's own choice, and that she was determined to follow the spirit of her husband. Next morning, the corpse was conveyed on a bier to the bank of the sacred river, where a circular grave, fifteen feet in circumference, and six in depth, was

prepared for its reception. The dead man was placed in the bottom of the grave in a sitting posture ; and the young widow, with the impress of girlhood still fresh on her face, her eyes beaming with enthusiasm, her features glowing with supernatural light, stepped from among her friends, and walked slowly round the pit, uttering a wild cry of "Huree-bul, Huree-bul." The words were caught up by the crowd, who repeated them in the same tone, while the infatuate woman proceeded seven times round the sepulchre, and then, amidst breathless silence, descended into it, sitting down behind the corpse, with her face towards the dead man's back, her left arm entwined round his neck, and her head reclining on his shoulder. Her right hand was raised in the air, over her head, with the forefinger erect, and moving in a circle, which it continued to do while the grave was being filled up, and the earth rammed deliberately round the living and the dead. Her body, up to the chin, ~~was~~ already entombed, but her raised face continued visible, and beamed with the same rapt look, the same unearthly decision. But the splashing earth rose higher ~~and~~ higher ; the face disappeared ; the rounded arm ~~was~~ covered ; and one last look, as the sickening spectator turned horror-stricken from the spot, showed ~~that~~ *the point of the finger was still erect, and still turning round !*

VIII.

THE MONGOLIAN FAMILY.

CHINA, Tartary, Thibet, and Japan, all countries equally averse to intercourse with foreigners, are the principal seats of a large tribe of the human family, classed together as Mongols. They have peopled the greater part of Asia from a very remote age, and hence claim precedence over the ancient nations of Europe.

The most important of these states is China, a vast empire, occupied by a race in every respect unique, and numbering nearly four hundred millions of souls. China Proper, or the Central Kingdom, called Chang-kwi, was known to the ancients, and its inhabitants are mentioned by Ptolemy, under the name of the Sinæ. This province contains the capital, Pekin, which covers within the walls an area of twelve miles, but is not remarkable for architectural beauty. Its principal structure is the royal palace, said to be a mile in length, and three-quarters of a mile in breadth ; but the only attractive feature in this huge pile seems to be its roof, which is composed of yellow tiles, highly glazed ; and thus, when they reflect the sunbeams, appearing like a mass of gold. Extensive gardens surround the imperial residence, and an artificial lake, studded with rock-girt islets, pours a number of little rivulets through the ground, which Chinese art has furnished with all the diversities of hill and dale, grove, cascade, and fountain. The city is divided into two towns, Chinese and Tartar ; but the streets in both are narrow, and the principal thoroughfares, besides being densely thronged, are encumbered with itinerant

stalls, and with hawkers and traders of all kinds, rendering progress a difficult feat. Mr. Elwes, in his highly interesting work, *A Sketcher's Tour round the World*, gives a ludicrous description of the streets of Canton, which will equally apply to those of Peking, where Mr. Barrow saw booths standing in the middle of the road, while great officers of state, attended by long trains of servants, with flags and streamers, on their way to the imperial palace, added to the confusion of the scene. The shops, which are open in front, are gaily decorated with flags and ribbons, with scraps of paper bearing some motto or proverb, and with all the radiant colours of the Chinese easel.

Nankin, the ancient capital of the empire, is of greater extent than Peking, but has now fallen into decay. The province, however, retains in its broken diadem the gem of Su-cheu, so famous in Chinese story, and which has given rise to the proverb of "Paradise is in heaven, but Su-cheu on earth." This beautiful city is the favourite residence of the Chinese noblesse, and is celebrated, before all the other cities of the empire, for its rich brocades, its jugglers, dancers, and pretty women. Thither the daughters of the chief mandarins are sent, as to a university, to be instructed in the arts of politeness, the science of etiquette, and the less important accomplishments of music and dancing; and it is generally acknowledged, that the women of Su-cheu are as distinguished for their refined manners as they are for their beauty.

The Chinese, who consider themselves the oldest people of the earth, carry back their chronicles for some thirty thousand years; but Sir William Jones could not trace them higher than the Cheu dynasty, which was contemporary with the later Judges of Israel, about eleven hundred years before Christ. Their form of government,

however, which retains the patriarchal character of the earliest times, fully establishes the antiquity of their origin, and it is probable that these eccentric descendants of Shem were the first settlers in the far East.

The Chinese appear to have been but little disturbed by foreigners till the reign of Zenghis Khan, the great Tartar chief, who, sweeping down like an avalanche from the vast mountain plateaux of Central Asia, extended his sanguinary sway over the whole Eastern world. Even Europe trembled at the name of the Mongol conqueror, and felt the presence of his savage hordes. China, with an energy worthy of her ancient traditions, stoutly opposed his progress, but in the end was subjugated by his grandson, Khan-Khoubilai, who founded the Tartar dynasty of the Youen. This, after existing a century, was overthrown, in the feeble reign of Chun-Ti, by Tchou-Youen-Tchang, the son of a labourer; and from this successful rebel sprung the celebrated dynasty of the Ming, which in 1368 ascended the imperial throne under the name of Houng-wou. The Ming revolution led to the expulsion of the Tartars, or, rather, to their extermination, as every Tartar found within the bounds of the empire was put to death; but towards the commencement of the seventeenth century, the powerful nation of the Mantchous, fired by the example of their ancestors, again burst into China, and speedily reduced it to subjection. Their success consigned the throne of China to the dynasty of Ta-ts'hing, which still retains the precarious inheritance, though the formidable movement now on foot, combining the two forces of nationality and fanaticism, will probably ere long wrest the now feeble sceptre from its grasp.

As the temperament and habits of a people are always deeply influenced by the national religion, it hardly excites surprise, after a careful study of the Chinese

character, to find that the religious element is very lightly esteemed by the flowery nation. I was informed by Mr. Elwes, whose observant eye is accustomed to look deeper than the surface, that the majority of the educated Chinese are atheists ; and though there are three authorized religious sects, Dr. Morrison considers that they are tolerated rather than supported by the imperial government. The ancient religion was a gross idolatry, stained with the most revolting rites ; but this was very early abrogated by Confucius, and a pure theism established on its ruined and deserted altars. The heathen apostle, who made his appearance about six hundred years before the Christian era, was the author of the Shu-king, a collection of Sacred Odes, probably suggested by the Old Testament, since they teach, what was then only known to the Jews, that there is but one God, and that he is eternal, omnipresent, and omniscient, the supreme ruler of the world, and the dispenser both of rewards and punishments. The sky was said to be the visible emblem of this beneficent Being, and this was to be worshipped, with humble prayers and offerings, on the tops of mountains—a practice evidently borrowed from the prevailing corruptions of the Jews. But Mongolian superstition soon interpolated this creed with the deification of the elements, and a cumbrous machinery of genii and spirits, which obscured its original features, and threw a darker veil over the majesty of the Deity. The eloquence of the great reformer Lantse, B.C. 550, and of the illustrious Kong-fu-tu, who flourished about a century later, failed to check the reviving spirit of idolatry ; and it has since struck its roots deeper and deeper through successive ages, though from the reign of Ming-ti, A.D. 63, it has had to contend with the more subtle juggleries of Buddhism.

Buddhism, which prevails over a great part of China, Tartary, Hindostan, and the Indian archipelago, has its root in Thibet. The appellation is derived from Buddha, the Deity, who, according to this creed, is perpetually incarnate, reappearing in a succession of bodies, so that on the demise of one, he is presently discovered in another. The religious orders generally seclude themselves in convents, or lamaseries, each of which has its own living Buddha ; but these are all subject to the chief deity, called the Tale-Lama, who resides at Lha-Ssa, the capital, and is invested with the supreme authority, spiritual and temporal. Buddhism inculcates the practice of many of the moral virtues, and, above all, humanity to the whole animal creation, a natural provision in a religion which, as an explanation of the constant reappearance of Buddha, has for its basis the Pythagorean doctrine of the transmigration of souls. When a Tale-Lama dies, the hierarchy expect his return in every new-born infant ; and he is sought for by certain marks, in a manner that forcibly calls to mind the inquisitions of the Egyptian priests for the Apis. The minor Buddhas, however, are occasionally required to support their divine pretensions by a miracle, and one of their favourite tricks is to cut open their abdomen, in the presence of a large assemblage of adorers, and then, by a touch of the finger, heal it up again. But such juggleries, though they may impose on the ignorant and the credulous, excite no surprise in those who are acquainted with the clever performances of Chinese conjurers, which may be seen in any of the places of public resort, and far surpass the pseudo miracles ascribed to Buddha.

Buddhism exercises a very pernicious influence on the social and moral position of woman ; but this effect is especially apparent in Thibet, where, in obedience to

long-established custom, nearly half the male population assume the idle functions and the vows of the priesthood. Such a practice, continued through every generation, necessarily leads to a depreciation of the ties of marriage, which, both in Thibet and China, are of the loosest kind, and the married women of these countries are completely at the mercy of their insensate husbands.

The antiquated and unwieldy laws of China afford the sex but little protection, though they visit its derelictions, and even its weaknesses, with unpitied severity. A wife, from the first day of her marriage, is bound in the most degrading servitude ; and, among the lower orders, it is she who undertakes the difficult and laborious work, while the lighter duties are assigned to the husband. In rural districts, women fulfil the most arduous employments of agriculture, toiling all the day in the field, while men look idly on ; and the patient and industrious wife, often when harassed by the cares of maternity, drives the cumbrous plough, leaving to her husband the easy task of sowing the ground. The women of the middle and higher classes are condemned to a seclusion tantamount to imprisonment. They occupy distinct sets of apartments, are shut up from all society, and are not even permitted—what indeed would be no great privilege—to take their meals with their husbands. The only place they are suffered to visit is the temple, to which they are conveyed at stated times, in a covered chair, or a wheelbarrow, jealously enveloped with curtains. As everything is done from their infancy to suppress the nobler emotions of nature—as they receive no intellectual culture, and their only education consists of a few useless accomplishments—they pass their existence in endless ennui, so uninfluenced by all the sensations of life that they must eagerly welcome death.

The daughters of the chief mandarins learn nothing but dancing and music ; and, in the misery of their solitude, seek relief in smoking, or in the deadly fumes of opium. Ladies of inferior rank, whom it is not considered so necessary to train in idleness, are taught embroidery and painting ; and to the cunning hands of these fair *artistes* we owe the painted gauzes, fans, and fire-screens of China, the brilliant and exquisite colouring of which is so universally admired. The inhuman custom of crippling the feet of Chinese ladies is well known ; but, as it is not referred to by Marco Polo, we may reasonably set it down, with many other barbarisms, as an invention of comparatively modern times. The feet are seized almost at the moment of birth, and the heel and all the toes, with the exception of the large ones, are compressed by hoops into the shape of an inverted cone, the foot being reduced to the size of a doll's, not exceeding four inches in length, and in breadth seldom more than two. Hence Chinese ladies are unable to walk any distance ; and the more they hobble in their gait, the more courtly and graceful they are thought. Long finger-nails are also considered a distinguishing characteristic of noble dames, and some of the ladies of the court, who are looked upon as the very pink of fashion, cultivate this grace with such success, that their nails are said to extend twelve inches beyond the tips of their fingers. The practice of crippling the feet is not followed in the province of Kiang-si ; and as the women of that district are able to move freely about, they are very serviceable in field-work, for which they have acquired such a reputation, that farmers usually purchase their wives in Kiang-si.

The wives of the Emperors, and the princesses of the blood royal, who form a community of themselves, are not always condemned to the same rigorous seclusion which

mantles the wretched families of the mandarins, and, in the huge palace of the great Khan, these favoured ladies exchange visits, attend fêtes and parties, and discuss scandal over their tea. For the princesses, however, this is but a short respite, as on attaining a marriageable age, they are condemned to wed some hideous Mongol chief, and are hurried off to the gloomy steppes and deserts of Tartary. Here they sigh for the happy and beautiful gardens of Peking, where they passed the years of their youth; and at one time they returned so frequently to the capital, in search of its innocent gaieties, that it was found necessary to issue a severe edict, by which it was decreed that they should only make their appearance at court once in ten years.

The matrimonial alliances with Tartar chiefs have prevailed from the time of the Emperor Kaoti, when the Tanjons, or Huns, after a succession of sanguinary inroads, exacted from the Chinese ruler, as the first condition of peace, an annual tribute of the fairest of his daughters. At that ancient date, a royal Sappho, looking back at her early years in the flowery land, bewails, in pathetic verses, the miserable fate to which she had thus been doomed, and contrasts the rugged life of her Tartar tent, where she lives on raw flesh and sour milk, exposed to all the caprices of a brutal husband, with the pleasures of her native Peking, the luxuries of the imperial palace, and the fond caresses of her indulgent parents.

Marriage is obligatory in China, and is regulated by specific laws. The first spouse, who receives the title of "Mother of the House," and enjoys privileges not extended to the other wives, is chosen by the parents of the bridegroom, who arrange the union with those of the lady, without reference to the feelings or the wishes of the young people. The bride is obtained by purchase, and

should there be competitors for her hand, she is awarded to the highest bidder. All, however, engage in the contest without any knowledge of the particular attractions of the lady, whose charms are never disclosed till she reaches the residence of her intended ; but the intrepid speculator, if dissatisfied with his bargain, may then return her to her parents, and dissolve the contract, provided he is content to forfeit the purchase-money. On the terms being arranged, the bride is locked up in a latticed chair or wheelbarrow, the key of which is handed over to the bridegroom, who, accompanied by his parents and friends, conveys the precious deposit to his house, when the casket is opened, and the living gem displayed. The marriage ceremony is simple and brief. All the preliminaries settled, the happy pair, in presence of their family and friends, go through the performance of eating together, and exchange cups, when they rise from their seats, and prostrating themselves before their parents, the union is as indissoluble and complete as Chinese ingenuity can make it. The public betrothal is usually followed by an entertainment, varying in splendour with the means and disposition of the two families, and the social rank of the bridegroom. A month afterwards, the parents of the bride, who have been only too glad to get her off their hands, honour her with a visit of ceremony, and she is then permitted herself to pay a similar compliment to her near relations.

Although the privilege enjoyed by a Chinese, of rejecting his purchased bride if her attractions do not equal his expectations, may be invidious and vexatious, it must be confessed that the popular estimate of beauty is not an extravagant one, or one difficult to be met. A snub nose, thick lips, small dark eyes carefully bereft of every lash, and jet-black tresses, form the principal beau-

ties of the face ; and corpulence, though not indispensable, gives an irresistible grace to the figure. Deformed feet, and finger-nails longer than talons, rendering the hands perfectly useless, complete the catalogue of charms, which, when they are all possessed by one person, go far to constitute a Chinese Venus.

A man is permitted to have as many wives as he can purchase ; and as women of the humbler classes are very industrious, and undertake every employment, they do not entail a heavy expense for their maintenance. The husband is authorized to chastise his wife with a bamboo ; but the thickness of the stick, as well as the exact number of blows for each offence, and the circumstances under which they may and may not be administered, are carefully adjusted by law ; and a blow more or less than the legitimate number will expose the husband to the avenging lash of the magistrate. Every incident of domestic life, and every word spoken, being regulated by etiquette, it is very easy to transgress, and the inexorable law insists that no transgression shall be passed over. For voluntary desertion of her family, to which a woman may be driven by unremitted ill-usage, the offender, on her apprehension, is reduced to the condition of a slave, and such she virtually becomes. But a man may commit the same act with impunity, though an absence of more than three years secures to his wife, on appealing to a magistrate, the privilege of contracting another alliance. Wives are very frequently deserted by their capricious consorts ; and they may be divorced, if such is the wish of the husband, for the most trivial causes ; such as loquacity, pilfering, fretful or jealous temper, or even for being afflicted with disease. Thus, after a woman has given her youth, health, strength, and the flower of her life to some despicable tyrant, and perhaps helped to maintain him in idleness by

er labour and industry, she may be cast off, in the dreary time of sickness or age, to perish of want—a death by no means uncommon in China, where the poor sometimes lie down in the public road to pay the last sad debt of nature.

The dress of Chinese women exhibits such a degree of taste as might naturally be expected from their neglected education. Among the lower classes, it is vulgar and tawdry, evincing neither fertility of resource nor harmony of colour. A straw hat, stuck with gaudy flowers, completely hides the well-dyed hair, which is turned in a top-knot over the head, and secured by a bodkin, while a strip of black velvet falls in front to the nose. Trousers of pink or yellow meet a blue cotton frock, and fit close and tight to the calf of the leg, so as to give due prominence to the overgrown ankle, the dimensions of which, though requiring no exaggeration, are magnified by rolls of bandage, of various colours, and besprinkled with beads and spangles, to attract and rivet the fascinated eye. Feet small as a doll's are encased in tinselled and embroidered shoes, which it has taxed the utmost ingenuity of the owner to render sufficiently ornamental, and nothing is needed but the limping gait to produce an irresistible effect. The dress of ladies differs only in the material, which is often of the most costly description; and gold and jewels, very profusely used, take the place of spangles and tinsel. When all this decoration is heightened by the blandishments of the toilet, such as tinging the teeth with betel and tobacco, which gives them a beautiful green and yellow appearance, and other similar devices, it will readily be acknowledged that a Chinese lady in full costume is calculated to produce a decided impression in a crowd.

The Tartar standard of beauty is somewhat different

from that established in the celestial empire. A genuine Mongol belle, living on the desolate steppes of the Ortons, in a village of scattered and ragged tents, plumes herself on her olive complexion, black hair, and small black eyes, the latter elliptical in shape, forming an acute angle with the ridge of the nose, and inclined obliquely from the temples. Her head has been carefully flattened; her forehead is wide, her chin peaked, and she rejoices in a flat nose, and ears that a jackass might envy. A broad, square, full figure, all bone and muscle, is preferred to the *embonpoint* of the Chinese, and, indeed, is absolutely required by a life of hardship and labour, in an ungenial, variable, and trying climate.

Tartars are proverbial for their skill in horsemanship; and a Tartar girl, from mere instinct—for it forms no part of her vocations—is as much at home on horseback as the best man in her tribe. There is no feat of equestrianism that she will scruple to perform; and a steed which would have daunted Mazeppa—a Bucephalus which Alexander might have hesitated to mount,—wild, fiery, swift as the wind,—is to her but an ordinary palfrey, and carries her safely over arid desert and mountain steep, without occasioning a moment's uneasiness.

Tartar women, while thus rough and ready, do not neglect those employments which are the natural province of the sex—the domestic duties, the preparation of their humble meals, and the use of the needle, in which, indeed, they are especially dexterous. With very rude implements they make all the wearing apparel of the men, as well as their own; and at the same time excel in the more delicate arts of embroidery and colouring. Their ingenious designs exhibit a natural taste for the beautiful, wholly irreconcilable with their actual social conditions, and proving that, whatever other effects may ensue, the

most disadvantageous circumstances cannot always overrule the rooted innate refinement of the female mind.

The Tartars differ from other Eastern nations in allowing women a certain liberty of action ; and their wives and daughters, instead of being secluded in close apartments, or pent-up tents, surrounded by the usual guards of such abodes, move freely about, visiting from tent to tent, and mingling even in the society of the other sex. But the laws relating to marriage are as invidious and unjust as those of China. Divorce, an institution so susceptible of abuse, is even more easy, and a man can cast off his wives at pleasure, without so much as alleging a reason. Hence, the ties elsewhere esteemed the most endearing in nature, are in Tartary held but lightly, and rent without scruple or compunction.

The wife, as in China, is obtained by purchase ; a deed being drawn up between the two contracting parties, in which the father of the bridegroom, acting in his behalf, agrees to present the friends of the lady with a certain number of sheep and horses, and, what is more to the point, a liberal donation of brandy, in exchange for their fair kinswoman. This covenant being duly concluded, the fact is solemnly announced to the bride's family, who, in the fulness of their joy, offer up a savoury sheep's-head to the household Buddha, and the lady's father quaffs a goblet of sour milk, not to the health of the plighted couple, but as a crowning formality, essential to the legalisation of the union. The cup, indeed, contains a piece of money, dropped into it by the father of the bridegroom ; and this is quietly pocketed by the other parent, who is thus said to complete and ratify the bargain.

The ceremonies of the nuptial day recall those in vogue among the wild nomadic tribes of Persia. There is the same procession of equestrians to the tent of the bride's

father, but it is not accompanied by the apathetic bridegroom. The latter, who perhaps has never seen the lady's face, contents himself with sending a party of his relatives to escort her home, and patiently awaits her arrival. On reaching the tent of her father, his friends are met by those of the bride, who surround the tent, and oppose their entrance. But, after a brief struggle, the bridal party force their way in, seize the bride, who is eager to depart, and sweeping in a circle round the dwelling of her father, triumphantly carry her off to that of her future husband. Here, in presence of the two families, and the assembled neighbours, who flock in uninvited, she makes an obeisance to her new kindred, to the bridegroom, and the household hearth; and all are then entertained with a feast, protracted over seven or eight days, and for which the bridegroom's father is recompensed by sumptuous donations from his kindred and connexions.

In Thibet, the grand centre of Buddhist influences, on which the code of the Mongolian deserts is founded, women are in much the same position as in Tartary. They enjoy an equal degree of freedom, and are permitted to associate openly with men. The law, however, in granting this liberty, requires that they shall make themselves as ugly as possible before they appear in public; and whenever they present themselves in the streets, their faces must be encased in a thick spotted varnish, which effectually screens every charm. This is the veil of the Thibetan lady, and to neglect such an essential part of her toilet, and show her face in its natural aspect, would be not only a violation of the law, but would subject the offender to arrest and punishment. The Thibetan women, however, groan under the odious usage, and sometimes run every risk to indulge the beaux with a glimpse of their faces. Like their Tartar neighbours,

they possess considerable taste, and are particularly skilful in painting. Their dress, though it differs but little from that of the men, is becoming, and admits of much variation in point of colour. The hair is worn long, parted in the centre of the head, and thrown in two wavy tresses over the shoulders. It is generally adorned with a band of pearls, or, if such a costly decoration is not to be had, by a string of beads ; and the bonnet of the European dame is represented by a cap of red cloth, worn rather jantily on the head. Altogether their appearance is such as almost to afford the Lamas an excuse, if one were demanded, for insisting that they should disguise and disfigure their faces.

The Thibetan women are very industrious, and, in addition to the ordinary duties of the sex, carry on all the traffic and petty commerce of the country. They convey their commodities to market over rugged and impracticable roads, without assistance from the men, and visit distant villages as hawkers and pedlars, displaying their wares at every house. They are naturally gay, courteous, and, of course, gentle and affectionate, and require only the beneficent influence of Christianity, and of mild and just laws, to raise them to a high standard of moral excellence.

A large branch of the Mongolian family is located in Japan, which, indeed, may compare with China in density of population ; and Jeddo, the capital, is said to contain more than ten millions of inhabitants. This vast empire, rising in the midst of the Indian Ocean, at a point constantly approached by the argosies of our merchants, is hermetically sealed to the rest of mankind, though the American government has recently received a promise that, after a certain time, its citizens shall be admitted to a limited intercourse. The measure of exclusion was first

adopted in consequence of the intrigues of the Jesuits, who, after being hospitably received and entertained by the Emperor, stirred up their adherents in the islands to revolt, and hence led to very serious disorders. On the suppression of the insurrection, Christianity, to which all the mischief was attributed, fell under a ban ; and it was pronounced a capital offence to hold any intercourse with foreigners. A slight exception was made in favour of the Dutch, who are suffered, under great restrictions, to send two ships every year to the principal island, to supply the court and nobility with articles of European luxury.

Thus Japan, with its mountains and forests, its rich and teeming valleys, its bustling crowded cities, is to its inhabitants an absolute prison, and to the world a land unknown—in it, but not of it. Still Europeans, thrown by shipwreck or other accidents on its inhospitable shores, have penetrated the cordon so jealously established, and acquired some knowledge of the government and people.

The sovereign power is vested in two emperors, one of whom is the supreme temporal authority, and bears the title of Kumbo-Sana, while the other, called the Kiu-Rey, devotes himself to spiritual affairs, and presides over the idolatrous religion of the country. Nominally, indeed, he is entitled to admonish, or even to restrain, the more potent lay Emperor, should he overstep the bounds of justice or decorum ; but his influence, when he ventures to exercise it, has but little real effect, and the strong arm of his temporal brother always prevails. The nobles and dignitaries, not a few of whom govern separate principalities with the attributes and prerogatives of kings, are subject to the temporal Emperor, and are occasionally obliged to appear at his court, when they present them-

selves with thousands of attendants, and surrounded by all the insignia and all the splendour of royalty.

As might be imagined, from the character of the government, woman plays no part in the history of Japan, though, allowing for Oriental usages, she is treated, on the whole, with tolerable leniency. She occupies a better position in the family, from not entailing any charge at her marriage, as a bride receives no dowry, but, on the contrary, is presented by her husband with a handsome donation, which is invariably appropriated by her father. In Japan, therefore, it is considered more fortunate to have daughters than sons, as the former ultimately prove a very profitable investment.

On the birth of a son, the event is commemorated by planting a tree, which, if the little stranger lives, is carefully tended till the day of his marriage, when it is cut down, and furnishes material for a chest, designed expressly to hold the wardrobe of the newly-wedded couple. The marriage, as in China and Tartary, is an affair between the parents, and the wishes of the young people themselves are never consulted. The bride is usually in her fifteenth year; but maturity being early developed, wedlock may be contracted at a still younger age, and the mother is often a child herself. Marriage is a religious ceremony, and is celebrated with great pomp, and many forms, in a public temple, in presence of the priests and idols, and the friends and kindred of both families. The priest blackens the pearly teeth of the bride, using for this purpose the same indelible lacker applied to coal-scuttles, and other similar japan-ware; and this serves, from that time to her death, to notify, like the wedding-ring of Europe, that she has entered the married state.

A man's wives all live together in one household. The

first wife, however, enjoys a superior rank, and exercises the greatest authority, the others being, to a certain extent, subject to her control.

Ladies of rank live in strict seclusion, and are hardly permitted even to stir from their apartments, though on special occasions they appear, under the sacred protection of the veil, in public thoroughfares, closely attended by their jealous and wary husbands. Women of the humbler classes present themselves in the streets unveiled; but they are not allowed to speak to a man unless their fastidious spouse, who perhaps has half a dozen other wives under lock and key at home, is present.

The costume of the Japanese has a characteristic common to the whole Mongolian race, inasmuch as the dress of the woman assimilates closely to that of the man. It is very simple, consisting solely of a loose dressing-gown, called a *chiramon*, worn over long wide trousers, and fastened at the waist by a band. Ladies in affluent circumstances wear as many as twenty of these garments at once, one over the other; and if they become too warm, deliberately throw a gown or two off, and let it hang down over the girdle, gradually stripping themselves of their redundant wardrobe, much in the same manner as the clown at Astley's, in his famous ride to Brentford. The hair of the Japanese women, whether rich or poor, is their most effective ornament. It is glossy and luxuriant, and is tastefully adorned with flowers and ribbons, adding materially to their charms.

In Japan, China, Tartary, and Thibet, where the Mongolian family has so long been settled, women, and even men, have for centuries remained in the same condition, bound, cramped, stationary. We are about to open a new page in their history and their destiny; but if it is to enregister such incidents as have hitherto

d the track of the Caucasian, better it were for
elves—for the honour of Christianity and of civili-
—that that yet hidden page were never turned.
hope for a happier and brighter result.

IX.

GREECE.

REECE is a land endeared to our sympathies and
ilities from the moment that they are first developed.
most ancient temple of the arts, the nursery of
and philosophy, and the earliest home of freedom,
associated with every sentiment that can charm the
animate the breast, or engage the understanding.
excellence seems too great to attribute to her
en; and her familiar history, a household book
time, claims ready belief for its most marvellous
es. We can recall the fabled statue of Pygmalion,
stood before his own rapt eyes, swelling with the
entle tide of life and motion: we can see the cold
e take form and expression from the Promethean
of Phidias; we can imagine, though not realize,
exquisite grace and matchless symmetry of the
ian Apollo. The mind still responds to the thrill-
lences of Homer, fires at the eloquence of Demos-
s, and lingers, a wondering pupil, at the charmed
f Aristotle. We bleed with Leonidas at the pass
ermopylæ; we read with throbbing hearts the
us story of Marathon; we kindle at the great
s of Alcibiades, Themistocles, Pericles, and Cimon.
possible, then, that even barbarism can have trodden

down the hallowed groves of the Academy, where, under the shadow of the classic portico, the immortal Plato taught, and crowds listened to the almost inspired lips of Socrates? The circus, the theatre, and the temple, the Areopagus and the Agora, have equally paid the debt of time; but mighty vestiges attest their ancient grandeur, and Greece is still holy ground to the poet, the antiquary, the sculptor, and the patriot.

Through these associations and these illusions we must grope our way to the real character and actual social condition of this remarkable people. The picture, alas! alters as we near it, and reveals the usual fallible touches of human infirmity. The favoured children of the gods, whom history has enshrined for our idolatry, were indeed but indifferent beings; their heroes were without generosity, their maidens without tenderness, and their matrons without virtue. It was they who condemned and destroyed Miltiades, who banished the just Aristides, and who put Socrates to death. They it was who, jealous of their own freedom, enslaved the miserable Helots, and annually compelled those helpless serfs to mangle and slaughter each other, from a craven fear of their growing numbers. And finally, with all their poetry, refinement, and boasted chivalry, they remained to the last wholly unconscious of the true characteristics and innate natural susceptibilities of woman.

This renowned nation sprang from various tribes of robbers and pirates, who, in remote times, fixed their haunts in the masked harbours of the *Ægean*; and Thucydides, with manly candour, mentions that, even in an age comparatively enlightened, the Greeks considered piracy an honourable calling. Such it was undoubtedly esteemed in the days of Homer, who—and not Herodotus—was the father, or rather the patriarch

of history, as well as of poetry, and who flourished about 350 years before Christ. At this time the Greeks are represented as a family of tribes, united by the ties of a common origin and a common language, though the latter, as a natural consequence of their subdivision, was corrupted by different dialects. The government was vested in the several chiefs, who, however, were subject, in all important points, to the superior authority of the Basileus, or King—a dignity conferred by their suffrages on the warrior most distinguished for wisdom, virtue, undaunted courage, and personal strength. This position was an object of ambition to the greatest heroes, though the royal diadem imposed only additional cares, and did not relieve its possessor or his family from the humblest employments. Paris, a prince of the blood royal of Troy, assisted in the erection of his own palace; and Ulysses publicly made it a boast that he was an admirable ploughman. The king, however, usually possessed great treasures, and was allotted the largest share of the spoil during war, and, what he was envied more, the most beautiful female captive.

General dissoluteness of manners is the most prominent characteristic of the Homeric era; and woman, instead of being an instrument of civilization, is made the active agent of social corruption. The very subject of the *Iliad* shows, in a striking light, how little value was placed by the ancients on the precious influence of female virtue. Helen, the heroine of the immortal epic, was not more distinguished for her personal beauty, though it is described as divine, than for her frailty and perfidy. Even in the tender period of childhood, her dawning charms attracted the eye of violence, and the lovely princess was only in her tenth year, when she became the prey of Theseus. Recovered by the prowess of her

brothers, her hand was sought by all the princes of Greece, who, for this purpose, repaired in a body to the splendid court of her father—Tyndarus, King of Sparta. The monarch, bewildered by so many suitors, was relieved from the perplexity their rivalry occasioned by the advice of Ulysses ; and the favour of Helen herself secured the prize for Menelaus. Yet, in a few years, the young queen, surrounded by every enjoyment that affection could prompt, or wealth and power command, abandoned the husband of her choice, and her infant children, to elope with a stranger, who, in the guise of a friend and a guest, outraged at once the laws of hospitality and of nature.

Such was the degraded character for whom the infatuated Trojans took up arms, and whom the princesses of Troy, far from repudiating, openly received as a sister. Nor was it esteemed discreditable to Helen that, while she was thus sheltered and protected in Troy, she maintained a clandestine correspondence with the leaders of Greece, in which she divulged, without scruple or remorse, the military plans of her defenders. On the death of Paris, she married his brother Deiphobus, and finally betrayed that prince, with whom she had pretended to be enamoured, to the Greeks, sealing her treachery with his blood.

The fate of Helen involved a termination not unsuitable to so profligate a career. Retiring to Rhodes, she fell a victim to the unscrupulous vengeance of another woman, Polyxa, widow of Tlepolemus, who, discovering her retreat, caused her to be seized by her female slaves disguised as furies, and, to these pitiless wretches, a tree furnished a gibbet for the fairest of her sex. What was the Greek estimate of virtue may be inferred from the fact, that, after her death, the frail Helen was awarded

divine honours, and she who in life had been weaker than a woman, in the grave was exalted into a goddess.

Sappho is a more signal, because a more brilliant example, of the corruption of the female character among the early Greeks ; and fragments of her own deathless lyrics survive to attest her depravity. To incomparable beauty, this gifted woman added every rare endowment of the mind, and some of the most engaging qualities of the heart. For her immortal lays, she received from her countrymen, in a later age, the flattering appellation of the Tenth Muse, and their plaudits have been approved by the candid judgment of posterity. But while we are struck by the fire of her words, and the melting tenderness of her melodious notes—while we kindle at the glow of her genius and her imagination, we turn in disgust from her indelicacy, her levity, and her crimes. Painful it is to reflect, what the ancients have not sought to disguise, that these were the characteristics, not of an individual, but of the whole female community ; that they were held up for admiration, and for universal imitation, and were even stamped with the solemn approval of the gods.

Sappho, one of the earliest poets, is, at the same time, the first woman who is recorded to have died for love. Transported by her passion for Phaon, she became indifferent to her divine gifts, to the ties of nature, and to the pleasures of life, and, in a moment of frenzy, put an end to her own existence. To such a mind, even suicide must be made sublime, and the memorable spot which was the scene of her death is still pointed out to the voyager along the shores of Greece. It bears the significant name of " Sappho's Leap."

The religion of the Greeks was eminently calculated to induce and foster a corrupt system of morals, which, in-

deed, was but too consonant with the natural disposition of the people. Their mythology was essentially material, and the gods were represented with all the passions and all the infirmities of men. Newgate, peopled with the blackest criminals, could hardly have matched the Grecian pantheon; and women were taught to adore deities, whom men, had they possessed any of the higher or nobler impulses of humanity, should have blushed to name. Materiality was carried to such an extent, that every passion, every sentiment, every emotion, almost every natural object, was physically embodied; and anger, despair, sleep, woods and rivers, fountains, rocks, and whirlpools, were converted into divinities, and became the arbiters and ministers of fate.

The far-famed oracle of Delphi, shrined in the temple of Apollo, at the foot of Mount Parnassus, exercised a leading influence on the religious and social, and even on the political government of the Greeks. Delphi was supposed to be the centre of the earth, and the stately temple was erected over a hole, which, as the legend affirms, continually emitted a steam-like exhalation, infused with the prophetic breath of Apollo. The oracular responses were pronounced by a woman, who derived from her office the high name of Pythia; and the prophecies, which soon acquired a world-wide reputation, and still remain among the puzzles of history, were originally delivered in verse; but on its being sarcastically observed that the god of poetry was a very indifferent poet, prose, always closely mantled in a veil of mystery, was substituted. When required to discharge this function, Pythia, attended by a train of five priests, arrayed in sacerdotal vestments, dipped her head in the fountain of Castalia, on the rise of Mount Parnassus, and then, wreathing her brow with the sacred laurel, entered the

gloomy subterraneous cavity of the temple, and seated herself on a three-legged stool, called a tripod, which was perforated beneath, and placed over the focus of the sulphurous vapour. Inspiration sometimes developed itself in a gentle manner, and the oracle was then uttered in accents soft as music ; at others, the Pythia, as soon as she inhaled the vapour, was seized with convulsive throes, burst into wild cries and howlings, and pronounced the response, when questioned, in broken and frantic words, with difficulty taken down by the attendant priests. Plutarch mentions one occasion when the cries of Pythia were so piercing, and her throes so horrifying, that the priests fled in dismay from the temple, and the miserable victim of superstition expired herself on the following day.

The oracle, as may be imagined, often drew its inspiration from other sources than the Castalian fountain, or the prophetic vapour ; and Pythia, like Danae, was vulnerable to a shower of gold. Originally the office was filled by beautiful maidens, still in the flower of youth ; but Echebrates, a Thessalian, having attempted the abduction of one of these fair priestesses, none were afterwards advanced to the tripod till they had reached their fiftieth year. The Pythias were bound to a life of virtue, a rule not always followed by the Grecian priestesses, as the case of Hero, priestess of Sestus, sufficiently attests. Hero held up a beacon to her lover Leander, as he swam across the Hellespont to her feet, from the very turret of the temple, and from that spot she precipitated herself into the sea, when, in the midst of a terrific storm, she saw the sturdy swimmer engulfed by the waves.

Such a religion as that of Greece necessarily weakened and perverted, but could not wholly destroy, the beauti-

ful moral influence of woman ; for the poetic temperament of the Greeks never failed to acknowledge and recognise an element so fruitful of passion and feeling. The poems which recite their early history, are chiefly interesting from their various female characters ; and conflicting sentiments, now of sympathy or pity, now of indignant wonder, throw a halo, as we read, round the immortal names of Penelope, Andromache, Helen, and Hecuba. Yet no consideration was shown for the weakness and tender instincts of the sex, which appeal so eloquently to man for protection. It was a common occurrence for the women of one tribe to be carried off by a ruthless foray from another, when they were reduced to slavery, without regard to rank or age, and could only be recovered by a heavy ransom. How harshly these poor captives were treated, we are but too clearly informed in the vivid pages of Homer ; and, on one occasion, Telemachus, for a slight offence, orders some unfortunate slaves to be hanged on the spot. The female captives were charged with all the hard work and drudgery of the household, and it was their especial task to grind the corn, an arduous operation, performed by a clumsy and cumbrous handmill. Weaving and spinning, their other occupations, were undertaken also by the women of the family, from the mistress to her youngest daughter ; and the highest rank did not exempt a woman from a share of the domestic duties. Both Helen and Penelope were skilful sempstresses ; and Nausikaa, daughter of Alcinous, King of Phæacia, is represented at the river-side, assisting her female slaves to wash the linen of the family. This equal participation of labour imparts a softer tint to the dark complexion of the time. It is pleasant to follow Herodotus, with his ever-tripping step, into the simple hut of the King of Macedon, and

hold the Queen engaged in the humble task of kneading flour and baking bread. Not less striking is the picture given by Thucydides of the dwelling of Admetus, king of the Molossians. Here it was that Themistocles, on his flight from Greece, found shelter and food, protected, though under the roof of a foe, by the sacred laws of hospitality. Weary and exhausted, the fallen statesman reached at night the well-known abode of the King : before him was darkness and a desert ; behind, eager pursuers close on his track. But a glimmering light shows him the form of a woman, and in her breast he knows full well that the wretched may ever claim, if not protectress, at least a friend. He enters the house, and, announcing his name, throws himself at the feet of the Queen, the wife of his sworn enemy. A step, too similar to be mistaken, is heard without : it is the King's ; but the ready tact of woman, never wanting at the call of humanity, is quick to interpose ; and the Queen snatches her sleeping infant from its couch, and places it in the arms of the fugitive. The King is instantly disarmed by the spectacle ; and Themistocles, detested as an enemy, is sheltered and succoured as a guest.

At an earlier period, the historian introduces us to the residence of the kings of Sparta, where Argia, the Queen, widow of Aristodemus, is seen washing and dressing her twin sons. These princes afterwards became joint kings of Sparta, and from the time of their accession, the Lacedæmonian throne was always shared by two monarchs.

Previously to the historic period, the Greeks, like other primitive nations, obtained their wives by purchase from their parents ; but, according to Aristotle, the price was sometimes relinquished in favour of a distinguished suitor. Polygamy, as the case of Priam shows, was

allowed, but not universally practised ; and the Odyssey relates that Laertes, King of Ithaca, declined to take a second wife, from a generous consideration for the feelings of Anticleia.

Among the Spartans, the position of woman was somewhat altered by the iron laws of Lycurgus. Aristotle, indeed, affirms that the Delphian missionary, bent on universal reformation, endeavoured to throw his heavy yoke over both sexes alike, but was so vehemently opposed by the fairer portion of the community, that, at length, he consented, as a compromise, to exempt them from his most severe restrictions. Hence a Spartan lady kept a sumptuous and liberal table at home, while her husband, as a patriotic citizen, was bound to drink black soup at the public refectory. Spartan women were famed for their beauty, and, by the code of Lycurgus, those who excelled in personal attractions, were, on public grounds, permitted to have two or even three husbands ; so that it was not rare for the same woman to be mistress of two households and mother of two families. Such a practice necessarily involved great corruption of morals, insensibility to the natural conjugal ties, and even indifference to the claims of maternity. It was more obduracy, than patriotism, that dictated the Spartan mother's injunction to her son as he departed for battle, "Return either with your shield, or upon it !"

So loose was the nuptial connexion in Sparta, that it was not unlawful, or even unusual, for a man to give away his wife ; and without any scruple, form, or legal process, totally to dissolve their union. By this means King Ariston obtained the beautiful spouse of his friend Agetus, with whom he entered into a formal contract ratified by oath, and solemnly referred to the gods, that each should give the other whatever he might desire o

his worldly possessions. Ariston having performed his part of the agreement, by the sacrifice of a large sum of gold, claimed the more precious treasure of Agetus, and he overreached subject, obliged to comply with his demand, presented the King with his wife, who afterwards became the mother of Demaratus.

The Spartans, however, were not universally insensible to the domestic affections, and the strong ties of nature occasionally asserted their ascendancy, in spite of corrupt habits and vicious conventional usages. King Anaxerides could not be induced by the supposed infirmity of his queen to resort to the cruel expedient of divorce, although, as the royal stock was in danger of extinction, it was repeatedly urged upon him by the Ephori; and to the remonstrances of his subjects, he mildly replied that "they did not act justly, in urging him to dismiss his wife, when she had done nothing wrong, and take another in her place, and therefore he would not comply with their request." At last, indeed, as a compromise, he consented to contract a second marriage, without dissolving the first; but this arrangement was made with the consent of his queen, who afterwards became "the joyful mother of children."

Nor are there wanting examples of conjugal tenderness and devotion among the Spartan women. The Minyæ, a tribe allied to the Lacedemonians, having been driven from their settlement at Lemnos by an irruption of the Pelasgians, were received and sheltered by the Spartans, who allotted them lands in their narrow territory, and gave them their daughters in marriage. But the Minyæ were not content to be guests, and gradually assumed the airs and arrogance of masters; on which the Lacedemonians, who valued nothing so much as their independence, fell upon them unexpectedly, and seizing the whole tribe,

threw them into prison, waiting only for night, when alone criminals could be executed, to put them to death. In the mean time, however, they allowed the wives of the Minyæ to enter their dungeons, to bid them a last adieu, and these devoted women availed themselves of the opportunity to exchange clothes with their husbands, who thus passed out unmolested ; and when the Spartans came to slay their prisoners, they found, not the detested Minyæ, but their own daughters. A wild though sublime scene ensued ; and in the end the punishment of the Minyæ was commuted to banishment, as a tribute to the pious affection of their wives.

The Lacedemonians gave large dowries with their daughters, often to the complete spoliation of their sons ; and it was a common occurrence for a Spartan, at his death, to leave all his property exclusively to his daughters. By law and custom wealth was allowed to accumulate in the hands of women ; but a rich man, however innocent and blameless his conduct, was looked upon with suspicion. Women, moreover, instead of being shut up in secluded chambers, as in other parts of Greece, were, from their earliest youth, allowed the utmost liberty ; and Xenophon and Plutarch describe them as taking part in the public games at the theatre—boxing, wrestling, and running races, in presence of the King, the state functionaries, and the young men of the city. Their costume was not unsuited to these athletic exercises, consisting simply of a light tunic, divided at the skirt, so as to leave the limbs, which were exposed to view, perfectly free from restraint. In this attire, and with their flowing hair wreathed with flowers, they took part in the religious ceremonies, sang and danced at the national festivals, and attended, in their turn, at the theatre, to witness the rigorous training of the young

men. On the death of a king, it was their duty to go in solemn procession through the city, attired in mourning, and beating a caldron ; and, at this ominous sound, a man and woman of every family were obliged to assume the same melancholy garb.

The Spartan damsel married at an early, though not an imprudent age, and the personal appearance, rather than the rank or means of the suitor, decided her election. Heiresses were at the disposal of the King, who, as a rule, bestowed them, without consulting either themselves or their parents, on the poorest citizens ; so that the wealth of the nation might be distributed equally among all classes. When accepted, the suitor carried off his bride by force ; but in a few days she returned to the house of her father, and continued to reside under the parental roof for two or three years, only seeing her husband by stealth, and disguised in man's apparel. Usually she was mother of a family before she became mistress of a household.

The faith of a Spartan woman was plighted, not to her husband, but to the state, and this sentiment was impressed upon her in the first years of childhood. Herodotus describes it as a ruling principle in Gorgo, daughter of King Cleomenes, when only in her ninth year. The young princess was accidentally present at an interview between her father and Aristagoras, Tyrant of Miletus, when the latter, anxious to engage the monarch in the Ionian war, offered an enormous sum for his services, gradually increasing the amount till it reached fifty talents. At this point he was interrupted by the little princess, who exclaimed to Cleomenes—"Father, this stranger will corrupt you, unless you depart :"—on which the King, who had begun to waver, and felt the truth of the child's remark, was reminded of his duty, and

rushed out of the room. Gorgo afterwards became the wife of Leonidas, who fell at the head of the immortal three hundred, in the pass of Thermopylæ; and it was through her instrumentality that the Greeks were first apprised of the approaching invasion of Xerxes. The intention of the Eastern tyrant had been discovered by Demaratus, who, together with many other Greeks, was then at Shushan, the Persian capital; and, though surrounded by spies, he contrived to inscribe the important information on a slab of wood, carefully coated with wax, which he sent to Sparta. The object of such a present, however, quite baffled the comprehension of the Spartans, till it was shown to Gorgo, who penetrated the mystery, and by her advice the wax was scraped away, and the latent writing revealed.

But patriotism was an inherent sentiment in the women of Greece; and the fair daughters of Athens, though reared under a totally different code, could be as stern in the public cause as the more favoured matrons of Sparta. On the defeat of the Athenians by the Argives in Ægina, the only survivor of their little band, on his return to the classic city, was seized in the street by the wives of those who had fallen, and beaten to death with the clasps of their girdles, each woman demanding, as she struck the wretched man, where he had left her husband. But their conduct was far from being applauded by the Athenians, who, instead of awarding the victor *furies* an olive crown, took alarm at such an insurrection of the *sex* and this exhibition of their prowess was made the *pretex* for an alteration in their costume. It was decreed *tha* from that time, the dress of the women should *consis* solely of a linen tunic, worn loose, so that there might be no need for a clasp, which, as the recent event *showe* could, while it served to adorn a woman's waist, be *applie*

very effectually over a man's shoulders. On the other hand, the Æginian and Argive women, whose husbands had been the victors in the battle at Ægina, as a memorial of the national triumph, and in derision of the Athenians, now made the clasp a more conspicuous feature in their dress, and gradually enlarged it to double the original size.

The Athenian women were not singular in their partiality for physical force, under the influence of national feelings or resentment. Thucydides, in his account of the Peloponnesian war, describes the women of Platea as rising with their husbands to drive the Theban garrison from their city, and while the fugitives were pursued through the narrow streets by the men, the fairer portion of the population pelted them with tiles from the roofs of the houses. But pity melted the heart of one of these Amazons, when she saw the Thebans hard pressed by their enemies, and handing them a hatchet, she enabled them to sever the bar of the city gate, and thus effect their escape.

Their violent passions often urged the Greek women to the verge of frenzy, and sometimes to actual madness. At one period, insanity assumed an epidemic character among the women of Argos, and every family had its female maniac. Terrified at such a visitation, the Argives had recourse to the skill of Melampus, who, after a time, succeeded in arresting the plague, but demanded their liberties as his reward. Even this hard penalty the Argives considered preferable to the disease.

The memorable clasp affray was not the only occasion on which the Athenian women signalized their resolution and their cruelty. Athens being reduced to great extremities by the invasion of Mardonius, Lycidas, one of the senators, in a solemn assembly of the citizens, recom-

mended that the state should send in its submission to the invader, on which he was adjudged to be stoned ; and the women of Athens, hearing what had happened, determined that his innocent wife should share his fate. Accordingly they went in a body to his house, seized the terrified lady and her children, and drove them with frightful yells and imprecations through the city, every fair hand hurling a stone at their victims, till the sacrifice was complete.

Nor were the Athenian women less ferocious in their acts of private vengeance. At one of the festivals of Diana, the Pelasgians, in revenge for their expulsion from Attica, forcibly carried off fifty Athenian women as captives to Lemnos, and compelled them to become their wives. But these heroines, though subjected to every indignity and humiliation, could not be subdued by captivity. They trained up their children as bitter enemies to their fathers, teaching them only the loved dialect of their native city, with the customs, principles, and religion of their countrymen ; and their lessons were so effective, that the boys, as they grew up, scorned to associate with the Pelasgians. A horrid and sweeping tragedy was the climax of this unnatural discord. The women, unable any longer to suppress their resentment, deliberately murdered their husbands ; and both they and their children were then put to death by the Pelasgians, who made no allowance for the cruel provocation they had received.

The national games and festivals of Greece, one of which had afforded the Pelasgians an opportunity of effecting this abduction, were eagerly attended by women, and were often chosen as auspicious occasions for marriage. Cleiothenes, Tyrant of Sicyon, being victorious in the chariot-race at the Olympic games, made a proclamation that " whoever of the Greeks deemed himself worthy to

become the son-in-law of Cleiothenes, should present himself at Sicyon within sixty days, and submit to a year's trial of his capabilities and character, when the most deserving should be rewarded with his daughter's hand." Such a promise naturally attracted a number of competitors, not from Greece alone, but from all the surrounding countries, and even from Sicily and Italy; but among the whole of the assembled suitors, none found such permanent favour with Cleiothenes himself as a young Athenian named Hippoclidea, for whom he secretly destined the prize. Fate, however, was adverse to his intentions. On the day fixed for the momentous award, when the columned hall was crowded with the expectant suitors and noble guests, there was a vehement call for music, and Hippoclidea, to the horror of the decorous father, leaped on the table and began to dance, finally turning over on his head, and kicking his heels in the air. At this unwonted spectacle, Cleiothenes could no longer restrain his indignation, and angrily exclaimed, "Son of Timander, you have danced away your marriage." "No matter," cried the indifferent lover, "no matter to Hippoclidea." And he continued to amuse the company with his antics, till Cleiothenes commanding silence, assigned the hand of his daughter to another Athenian, Megades, son of Alcmaeon. From this union sprang, in the second generation, the peerless Agarista, who, marrying Xanthippus, became the mother of Pericles.

An Athenian millionaire named Callias, who had been victor in the horse-race in the Olympian games, and second in that of the chariots, resolved, under the influence of the popular applause, to bestow his three daughters in marriage in honour of his triumph. Accordingly, giving each of the maidens a magnificent dowry, he authorized them to choose a husband to their own taste,

from their assembled countrymen, and then solemnized their respective nuptials in the most sumptuous and costly manner.

The institution of marriage, so lightly regarded by the Spartans, was revered by the Greek women generally, and they gave innumerable proofs, both as wives and daughters, of their deep and earnest veneration of the domestic ties. What can be more touching than the conduct of Elpinice, who voluntarily gave her hand to secure the liberation of her father, the great Miltiades! or can fiction depict a scene more tender or sublime than the spectacle of Euphrasia giving nurture from her bosom to her famishing parent? The love of Labda for her infant son, afterwards Tyrant of Corinth, nerved her to defy a gang of armed desperadoes bent on his destruction. The Delphian oracle having declared that the child would ultimately become King of Corinth, his relatives, who had usurped the government, and wished to keep the sovereign power in their own hands, determined to prevent such a result by putting him to death. With this view, a band of conspirators presented themselves at the house of Labda, and requested to see the boy, all having previously bound themselves, under a solemn oath, that he who first received him should plunge a knife in his heart. But the trusting infant, as he left the arms of his mother, met his intended murderer with a smile, and the man's heart being touched, he passed him on to one of his accomplices, who proved equally compassionate; and the infant was handed successively to each of the party with the same happy result. The whole gang then hastily left the house; but the mother had now become alarmed, and, listening at the door, she heard them abusing and deriding each other without, and finally agreeing to return, and, by striking together, all take an equal

share in the murder. Alone, and out of reach of help, whether of friends or neighbours, Labda might have looked on the event as certain ; but she retained her presence of mind, and, regardless of her own safety, noiselessly secreted the child in an adjacent chest of meal. Hardly had she done so, when the ruffians burst again into her presence, and, no longer concealing their object, searched every part of the house for the infant, without once glancing at his covert. Baffled and enraged, they then turned in a fury on Labda ; but no threats could move the devoted mother to divulge her secret, and, at length, they were obliged to abandon their design, and leave the issue to destiny. So nearly did fate snatch from fame Cypselus, Tyrant of Corinth.

The love of Xantippe gives additional pathos to the last moments of Socrates ; and it was the more striking, because it seemed, to those who had no perception of the often hidden depths of woman's heart, to be wholly inconsistent with her natural disposition. Xantippe was the scold of Athens. Socrates, indeed, as he once avowed, had made her his wife solely that he might be continually subjected to the discipline of her temper, a probation which, in his opinion, would enable him to bear patiently the bitterest taunts and abuse of his enemies. We try in vain to conceive a shrew, compared with whom the Katherine of Petruchio was insipid and tame. Yet, under her intractable temper, this woman masked, in sullen disdain, a warm and loving heart. Her son, Lamprocles, in describing her to Xenophon, emphatically declares that she exceeds in fierceness the wild beasts of the forest, but, in the same breath, acknowledges her to be a kind, indulgent, and anxious parent. In the thirty days that intervened between the condemnation of Socrates and his death, she could not be induced to leave

his side. After an interval of two thousand years, we still look back with sympathy at the memorable scene, in which this Athenian virago, now melted in tears, was one of the principal figures. The venerable philosopher sits calm and majestic, in the midst of his weeping friends, who are scarcely affected more by his almost divine words than by the emotion and touching sorrow of his wife. At that moment she seems to participate the sublime greatness of his spirit—to follow his eye, so soon to be sealed by death, through the thick veil of Pagan superstition, to the realm of a second existence—to the glorious throne of the UNKNOWN GOD. His friends urge him to escape, and proffer the means of effecting and securing his flight; she listens in silence while the philosopher, true to his mission, gently reminds them that he has often braved death in the service of his country, and that he cannot prolong, by a breach of the laws, a life so near its natural close. He then receives the deadly cup, and with a smile, bids adieu to his wife, to his sorrowing friends and disciples, and to a corrupt, obdurate, and besotted world.

The Greek nation, and especially the community of Athens, were indeed ill prepared to receive that ethereal philosophy which was taught and preached by Socrates. The disposition of the people of Attica was essentially vicious and dissolute; and this was mainly owing, in the first instance, to the complete repudiation and renouncement of the influence of woman. Great wrongs wrought out their own retribution; and the oppression of the weak, in the end, recoils, in some way or other, on the insolent and strong. The demoralization of female society in Athens, which at first was confined to the slave, gradually worked up, through successive grades, to the highest rank, and tainted the whole fabric. In one age

we behold even a princess of the royal house of Codrus publicly convicted of vice. Her trespass was fearfully punished by her incensed father, Hippomenes, the Archon, who, regardless of the entreaties of his friends and kindred, shut her up in a dungeon with a wild horse, without food or water, while her lover, in cruel derision, was yoked to a chariot, and driven through the streets till he expired.

Such excesses paved the way for the severe laws of Draco, which Demades, with his usual felicity of expression, forcibly describes as written, not in ink, but blood. Draco, indeed, is said to have observed that the least offences merited death, and that he could devise no greater punishment for the worst. The volatile Athenians could not long submit to a yoke too heavy to be borne; and, after a troublous interval, they referred the task of carefully revising the laws to Solon, son of Execestides, justly surnamed "the Wise." This illustrious sage, aided by the genius and influence of Pisistratus, who was now in the zenith of his fame, succeeded in establishing a code suited alike to the peculiar temperament of the people and the purposes of morality. He seems to have directed especial attention to the reformation of the female portion of the community, and framed many laws relating exclusively to women, which, though quite unintelligible to a modern understanding, doubtless had reference to some particular circumstances of their condition, not preserved by the careless hand of history. Thus they were prohibited from leaving home with more than three changes of apparel, and a specified allowance of provisions; and at night, they were only suffered to appear in the streets in a carriage, and preceded by flambeaux. They usually married at fifteen, and the hand of a maiden, whether rich or poor, was at the disposal of her parents, or rather

of her father, who gave her a portion, or exacted a dower, at his own will and pleasure. Women of all ages lived in strict seclusion, and could not attend even funerals except under certain restrictions, which officers, deriving their authority from the Areopagi, were appointed to watch and enforce. Their employments, when the ordinary domestic duties were discharged, consisted of spinning, weaving, and embroidering; and women were regularly trained as accoucheurs, a profession which was followed by Phænarete, the mother of Socrates.

But the laws of Solon failed to oppose a check to the inherent depravity of the Athenians, and, by degrees, they relapsed into their original social corruption, which grew more and more inveterate as they began to mingle with the Persians. The domestic relations were poisoned at their source; and a number of foreign women, called Hetæræ, or companions, were introduced by the Greeks into their houses, and made the associates of their wives. Athenian matrons did not scruple to accompany their dissolute husbands to the house of Aspasia, the mistress of Pericles, who avowedly maintained a number of the Hetæræ under her roof, and shared both their guilt and their spoil.

This was the golden age of Athenian splendour, luxury, refinement, and vice. The glowing colours of Agatharcus and Zeuxis embellished the public buildings of the city; Phidias adorned the Parthenon with its classic columns, its sculptured tracery, its statues of marble, brass, and gold; and the combined skill of Mnesicles, Callicrates, and Ictinus, directed by the taste and judgment of Pericles, could be traced in the spacious vestibule of the Citadel. The streets were thronged with orators, philosophers, artists, and students; music was heard in every house, and riot in every tavern; and, more than all, Socrates, stand-

ing out from the brightest points of the picture, instructed apt crowds in the garden of the Academy, in the busy precincts of the Agora, and on the consecrated summit of the hill of Mars.

Such was the city in which Aspasia, a foreigner and a slave, held a more than regal court. This gifted woman, who was the daughter of Axiochus, the Milesian, as greatly excelled all her contemporaries in her rare mental endowments, as in personal beauty, and, notwithstanding her depraved course of life, was bound to Pericles by a romantic passion. The attachment was mutual, and for Aspasia the Athenian magnate abandoned his wife and children, though his incorrigible parsimony, which contrasted strangely with his brilliant intellectual qualities, withheld him from contributing to her maintenance. So miserly, indeed, was the great Pericles, that his son was compelled to sue him for the means of subsistence, and, in providing for his household, his steward was expressly charged to buy at the lowest prices the cheapest commodities in the market. But this did not check the fervid love of Aspasia, or prevent her from living in luxury and splendour ; and Pericles, while he denied her his purse, so entirely reciprocated her affection, that he never entered or quitted her house without saluting her. When she was prosecuted for impiety by Hermippus, he personally conducted her defence ; and the appeal he made in her behalf was so moving, that, while it melted his audience, it filled his own eyes with tears. It was to Aspasia, indeed, he owed the high character, if not the actual gift of his eloquence, and she is even said to have been the author of his celebrated oration on the victims of the Samian war. Plato affirms that the Athenians learnt from her the art of oratory, and that her beauty was less attractive than her wisdom and wit. Fame, with its

brazen trumpet spread her reputation over Asia, and King Cyrus gave the name of *Aspasia* to Melto, his favourite wife, in compliment to the courtesan of Athens.

We can nowhere find a woman occupying so anomalous a position, and so powerfully influencing the tone of society. Her gorgeous saloon, enriched with the paintings of *Zeuxis*, was the favourite resort, not of *Pericles* alone, but of *Socrates*, the wisest and most virtuous of men—of statesmen, warriors, poets, sophists, who, forgetting their animosities, jealousies, and bickerings, here came with their wives to mingle with the frail *Hetære*, and listen to the bewitching accents of *Aspasia*. And at this time war raged without, and pestilence walked unchecked through the streets, smiting rich and poor alike. Suddenly a cry ran through the house, through the city, through Greece. The fell disease, which baffled the utmost skill of the physician, had struck down *Pericles*. Supported by the arm of *Aspasia*, he received on his couch the sad adieus of his friends, and calmly awaited the approach of death. Meanwhile, an orator, as if inspired by the spectacle, eloquently recounted the illustrious deeds of his life, and reminded him that they would survive, when he himself should be no more. "My friend," exclaimed the dying man, "you describe and extol acts of mine, which have been equalled by other generals and statesmen; but you omit to mention the most honourable testimony to my character—that no Athenian through my means ever put on mourning." And with these words, the last great light of Greece expired.

X.

R O M E.

THE name of Rome is the most precious bequest of history. Cradled in fables, nurtured in superstition, trained amidst the turmoil and the horrors of war, the character of the Roman people developed itself under every difficulty ; and the citizen of that great republic is still the standard by which we measure our liberties, our prerogatives, and our virtues. All that is heroic and glorious is contained in the venerable annals of Rome, commanding alike the admiration, the interest, and the sympathy of mankind ; and in contemplating the sad spectacle of her decrepitude and decline, or reading the disgraceful story of her fall, we are consoled by reminiscences of her infancy, youth, hardy and vigorous prime, and splendid meridian. The Eternal City, equally of the past and the future, is the proud appellation yet assumed by a town on the banks of the Tiber, the corpse of what once was Rome ; and so hallowed is the spot by associations and ruins, that the whole world has accepted and adopted the title.

The original government of Rome was in principle similar to that now existing in England, consisting of a king, an aristocracy, and a commonalty, the one material difference being—what indeed was productive of serious disorder—that the monarchy was elective. The legal enactments were framed by the king, who submitted them to the senate, an assembly composed of the hereditary nobility, or patricians ; and they only became law when, having passed this ordeal, they were ultimately

approved by a convention of the commons. At first the popular constituency comprised thirty tribes, corresponding to the parishes of the city ; but it afterwards received successive augmentations, till, in the reign of Augustus, it numbered sixty thousand voters. The plebeian, as he approached the elective urn, passed over a narrow platform, called the *pons*, or bridge, and here he announced aloud the side which he supported, and publicly recorded his vote. As he was often watched to the poll by a jealous patron, an employer, or a creditor, it was thought that this open mode of voting was incompatible with purity of election, and it was ultimately superseded by the ballot ; which, however, instead of securing the object desired, exercised a very pernicious effect on the national character, and from that moment the Roman citizen declined in virtue. Meanwhile the government had undergone various other changes. Tarquin, supported by the equestrian order, had rendered the regal authority despotic ; and on his expulsion from Rome, and the abolition of royalty, his usurped prerogatives were seized by the patricians, who for a considerable period kept the ignorant commonalty in subjection, without admitting them to the honours of office. But these were gradually wrested from the senate, and certain political dignities, which eventually became the highest prizes of ambition, were placed at the annual disposal of the plebeians. Such a constitution seemed unwieldy in the eyes of a tyrant ; and Augustus, while he professed the greatest deference for popular institutions, substituted for the democratic element a council of six hundred nobles, who retained the name and rank of senators, but were dependent for their honours and their fortune on the will of the Emperor. The latter now wanted nothing, for the consolidation of his power, but the removal, as far as regarded his own

acts, of all legal restrictions ; and this was speedily conceded by the obsequious senate, who, by a solemn decree, declared the Emperor "released from the law," and thus broke down the last defensible bulwark of liberty and order.

The laws of Rome, on which the existing codes of several European nations are founded, opposed, in their original form, a salutary check to magisterial power, though, at the same time, they pressed with severity and vigour on the community. Originated by Romulus, they were successively augmented by the piety and wisdom of Numa, and the more practical experience of Servius Tullus, who, though not the founder, may claim to be considered the moulder of the Roman statutes. The entire code was carefully inscribed on tablets of brass, called from their number the Twelve Tables ; and it commanded for ages the veneration and the implicit obedience of the people. By its stern enactments, which have been forcibly compared with those of Draco, capital punishment was adjudged to no less than eight offences, and one mode of execution was the cruel and agonizing death of the cross. But, as society advanced, the provisions of the Twelve Tables were found inadequate for the altered, requirements of the times, and the prætors and tribunes in the exercise of their judicial functions, were authorized to meet particular cases by edicts of their own ; which, however, had no permanent authority, and were even repeatedly abrogated by the framer himself. The mischief arising from such precarious and capricious legislation was ultimately corrected by Sulpicius Julian, who, in the reign of Adrian, collected, by command of the Emperor, the whole body of edicts, and digested them into one complete code, which, under the name of the Perpetual Edict, became the statutory law of the empire.

Finally, Justinian, aided by the genius and profound legal knowledge of Tribonian, produced his celebrated Code, Institutes, and Pandects, which entirely rescinded all previous legislation, and must remain the basis of civil jurisprudence to the latest times.

Before considering the effect of these successive systems on woman, in connexion with her moral, social, and domestic relations, it may be well to glance at the religious institutions of Rome, with which the sex were closely associated, and which necessarily exercised a leading influence on society.

The Romans were early remarkable for their deep religious feeling, their veneration of the forms, ceremonies, and consecrated rites of religion, and their jealous attention to the celebration of public worship. Romulus, whose comprehensive genius let nothing escape, was the originator of this national characteristic, and it was further developed by the institutions, the laws, and the example of Numa. All the gods, with the ample calendar of inferior divinities, were the objects of Roman idolatry; but especial homage was rendered to the three guardians of the city, Jupiter, Juno, and Vesta. The pagan King of Deities was throned in the Capitolium, a superb structure, on the Tarpeian rock, covering four acres of ground, and answering the double purpose of a temple and a citadel. A hundred steps conducted the devotee to the magnificent vestibule of the edifice, and three rows of columns, of purest marble, admitted him to the brazen threshold, where the spacious and stately interior burst on the charmed eye. All that taste and devotion could conceive, art execute, or unbounded treasures procure, was lavished on its adornment; and its roof of burnished gold looked down on swelling statues, drapery of every hue, goblets and shields glittering with gems—arms, standards, and *cha*

riots, the untold spoil of conquered nations. Priests and priestesses were appointed for the service of the shrine, and the sacrifices were solemnly consecrated by the supreme pontiff.

Superstition looked into the entrails of the offered victim for the oracles and decisions of fate. This was the province of the *Haruspex*, or soothsayer, who, when the body of the animal was opened, examined every part, and drew his inferences from the tone of the whole. If the entrails fell from his hand, were gorged with blood, or exhibited any natural defect, the gods were unpropitious ; but when the eager flame rose pure and bright round the altar, and devoured the mangled victim, a favourable result was expected. The *Augurs*, another order of prophets, drew their omens from the appearances of nature, or from incidents occurring at the critical moment of divination. Standing on the summit of a tower, with his face to the east, the south on his right, and the chilly north on his left, the augur raised aloft his crooked staff, divided the frowning sky into four parts, and read the awful messages of destiny in the aspect of the heavenly bodies, heard them pronounced by thunder, or saw them gleam in the flashing lightning. The idea, though dictated by superstition, was not wanting in sublimity, but the step to the ridiculous was inevitable ; and it provokes a smile when we hear of a great nation being intimidated by the sudden appearance of a flight of birds, or by the casual overturning of the salt.

Juno was a favourite deity of the Roman people, and particularly of the Roman matrons, who once a year held a festival in her honour. But Vesta, her sister, the goddess of fire, enjoyed the largest share of popularity, and was provided by the state with the most liberal foundation. A circular temple enshrined her image, and here,

in a secret recess, tradition deposited the venerable palladium of Troy, while the sacred flame yielded the goddess continual incense from a neighbouring altar. Six maiden priestesses, called the Vestales, or Vestals, were intrusted with the custody of the building, which, by the laws of Numa, no male was permitted to enter. The Vestals were selected for the office in their sixth or seventh year, and comprised both plebeian and patrician maidens, without reference to caste, though it was essential, as a condition of election, that they should be members of a respectable family, and be personally free from blemish. On their consecration, they took a vow of celibacy for thirty years, which was divided into three decades—the first, while they were yet children, being devoted to their initiation in the mysteries and duties of the priesthood; the second to the public discharge of the sacerdotal functions; and the third to the instruction of those rising Vestals who were to be their successors. After the thirtieth year, they were released from the yoke of office, and permitted to marry.

One of the principal duties of the Vestals was to keep the hallowed fire of the goddess perpetually burning. When this, from want of timely attention, was suffered to expire, grief and terror were depicted on every countenance in Rome; and, while the responsible priestesses underwent the punishment of the scourge, the flame was solemnly rekindled by the rays of the sun, attracted through a consecrated lens. Such a casualty was, however, of rare occurrence, and the fire burnt with but few interruptions for a thousand years, when it was finally extinguished by Theodosius, and the worship of *Vesta* abolished.

The Vestals were held in high respect by the Romans, and were endowed with peculiar privileges. The iron

lomb of parental control, so oppressive in Rome, was made off by the dedicated child the moment she entered adulthood ; in token of which the officiating priestess shaved her head, and crowned her with the liberating ægis. Vestals were at liberty to dispose of their property and possessions as they pleased : their evidence was received in courts of justice without the formality of oath ; and in difficult cases, they were often chosen as judges and arbitrators. They had the power of pardoning criminals whom they met accidentally in the streets ; chief places were assigned them at the public games ; all classes, from the highest magistrate to the slave, bowed at their approach, the very lictors of the consul dropping their fasces as they passed.

The dress of the Vestals, who were all remarkable for beauty, was well adapted to set off their charms, and it was not unsuited to their office. A surplice of white linen hung loosely over a vest of the same colour, edged with purple, and a purple mantle fell from the shoulders over the back, and swept the ground. Their shaven hair was inclosed in the infula, from which ribbons, called vittæ, streamed down to the mantle, forming a head-dress as elegant as it was unique. Even this costume, however, did not satisfy the taste, or the conscience, of some of the fair priestesses, and Livy records the Vestal Postunian, in the fourth century of the Republic, was brought to trial for wearing robes of too voluptuous a character, as well as for the freedom and looseness of her manners, and narrowly escaped condemnation.

Entombment alive was the penalty entailed by a transgression or infringement of the vestal vow. The place of sepulchre, where the last expiation was enacted, was at a spot called "the Field of Wickedness," in a low small cavity, at the bottom of a pit, constructed by Tarquin. Into this

hole the condemned Vestal was thrust ; a dim lamp, kindled from the fire of the outraged goddess, showed the narrow dimensions of her grave ; a flask of water was placed at her feet ; and the tomb was then closed on its living tenant. Eighteen young and beautiful women, some the victims of perjury, all of perfidy, perished in this revolting and horrible manner ; so refined and so implacable is the cruelty of man !

While the Romans intrusted the highest offices of religion to the Vestals, the State preserved, as a sacred deposit, on which its safety and welfare depended, the mystic writings of another woman, a prophetess, whom it regarded as the infallible arbitress of its destiny. The Sibylline verses were brought to Tarquin the Second by an old and venerable matron, who, making her way into the king's presence, produced nine antique volumes, for which she asked an exorbitant price. Tarquin refused to become the purchaser, and she withdrew, but presently returned, having burnt three of the books, and demanded the same sum for the remaining six. A second refusal, more decided than the first, again drove her away, when three more of the precious tomes were sacrificed, and she presented herself a third time before the king, still insisting on the same price for the three that were left. The amazed monarch was struck by her pertinacity, which, in the superstitious spirit of the times, he attributed to a divine impulse, and after a vain attempt to abate her demands, he tendered the money required, and thus became the possessor of these renowned oracles. No sooner had the payment been made, than the aged vendor mysteriously disappeared, nor could any trace of her ever be discovered.

The Sibylline verses were placed by Tarquin under the watchful care of a college of priests, and were only con-

lited on extraordinary occasions, when circumstances threatened the very existence of the commonwealth. They were lost in the great conflagration of Rome, during the troubles of Sylla ; but some passages of other sibylline prophecies were collected in Greece, whither commissioners were despatched by the senate for the purpose, and these venerated fragments were carefully preserved in the priestly archives. The verses were written on the leaves of plants, probably of the papyrus, and were placed by the Sibyls at the entrance of their caves, whence, if not immediately removed, they were swept away by the wind, and the occult writing became effaced. There may be an allusion to this fact in the beautiful simile of Isaiah—"We all do fade as the leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, do carry us away."

The first of the holy sisterhood of whom we have any account, apart from the records of fable, is Miriam, the sister of Moses. Deborah is the only other Sibyl who is especially mentioned in the pages of Scripture ; and the heathen writers, as might be expected, differ, according to their age or country, as to the precise number who have received or inherited the Sibylline mantle. Plato instances but one ; three are mentioned by Pliny ; Ælian speaks of four, and Varro of ten, the number usually adopted by the learned. Eight volumes of Sibylline prophecies are still extant ; but the minuteness with which they describe the character and sufferings of our Saviour, so much more literally than the sublime prophecies of Isaiah, excites a suspicion that they were composed after the event, probably by some zealous monk, and they are now universally regarded as spurious.

Between the predictions of the Sibyl, and the functions of the Vestals, it must be confessed that women exercised, in a religious point of view, considerable influence on the

government of Rome. Nevertheless, their social position, whether as wives or daughters, was a painful and ignominious one, and gradually corrupted their own character, while it vitiated that of the whole Roman race. Their servitude began with their birth, and ended only in the grave. The early laws of the Republic armed every father with the authority of a despot ; and liberty or bondage, life or death, were the terrible prerogatives of the Roman patriarch. A man could, at his own will, under the sanction and protection of the law, throw his daughter into a dungeon, withhold her food, cover her with stripes, or sell her as a slave. Even so late as the reign of Augustus, Erixo, a Roman magnate, deliberately scourged his son till he expired ; Arixas sentenced his heir to perpetual banishment ; and, in the reign of Adrian, a jealous father punished his child with the assassin's dagger. Another yoke was imposed on woman by the stringent law of classes. Apart from the two primitive orders of patricians and plebeians, there were the wide distinctions of *ingenuous* and *servile* birth, which, whatever the rank of the father, was fixed by the actual grade of the mother. An intermediate class was composed of libertines, or freedmen—slaves who had been emancipated by their masters, but who, by a strange anomaly, remained in a sort of semi-bondage, till they were invested by Justinian with the privileges of the ingenuous rank. Intermarriages of these grades, which could not but be frequent, exposed the woman to new degradation, and often made her the miserable parent of slaves.

The law invariably pressed upon her, in all her relations with peculiar hardship. From the moment of her birth, she was supposed to have no capacity and no feeling ; and both in her father's and her husband's house, she was treated, not as a living being, but as a mere piece

iture. In the distribution of property, the *agnats*, descendants of males, took precedence, to the most degree, of the nearest *cognats*, or representatives of females, even to the exclusion of a wife or mother; by the Voconian statutes, the right of female inheritance was altogether suppressed. This new code debarred an heir from receiving a legacy, if it amounted to more than a hundred thousand sesterces; and an only daughter, the scion of a race, was rendered incapable of inhering the property of her father. The Tertullian and Julian edicts annulled this abominable enactment; and laws of Justinian, while they purified the polluted judgment, restored to women the rights of inheritance and of nature.

A Roman maiden became a wife at the early age of sixteen. In accordance with an ancient usage, she was legally purchased, like any other slave, by her husband, and the terms were registered in a formal written deed, which might be regarded as the marriage certificate. The bride emphatically renounced the endearing ties of kinship, declared herself the daughter and the servant of the groom, and exchanged the stern discipline of her parental home for the bondage of matrimony. By a gift of three pieces of copper, she signified her submission to her husband, and her obligation to surrender everything to him all she possessed, when, after a sacrifice of fruits to the tutelary gods, the officiating priest symbolized their union by the mystic elements of wine and water, and then, in the presence of ten witnesses, placed on her finger the nuptial pledge, or ring, threw over her head the flaming veil, invested her with the golden keys, and gave to both bride and bridegroom a portion of the bridal cake, composed of salt and meal, which they ate together, seated on a sheepskin. From

this moment the husband assumed over his wife the jurisdiction of life and death ; he could lash her with the scourge, load her with chains, or slay her with his sword. All her property, everything she might ever inherit, became his ; and he could at any time, without reason or pretext, snatch the keys from her girdle, expel her from his house, and publicly deprive her of the wretched dignity of a wife. To what an extent divorce and murder were ultimately carried, we may learn in the pages of Juvenal ; and that brilliant poet mentions, as no extraordinary facts, a man who had buried his twenty-first wife, and a woman who had just been divorced from her eighth husband. A system so innately corrupt naturally led to general social demoralization : what is tainted at the core, becomes in a little time rotten throughout ; and the days of the empire, when tyranny and vice were leagued with luxury, and disdained even the flimsiest mask, exhibit such a pitch of depravity, as now awakens in every mind a thrill of pious horror. The women of this time were indeed bad, but the men were demons.

From such a period it is a relief to look back, through ages of strife and disorder, to the first dawn of Rome, though the scene that presents itself is one of violence and tumult. The city has just risen, like a young plant—almost like a weed, from the marsh of the Tiber : already it has put forth its buds and leaves, yet none who beheld it then, in its early promise, could dream that its mighty and majestic boughs would one day overshadow the earth. A joyous festival has brought crowds of strangers to its gates, all clad in holiday attire, all beaming with content, hilarity, and gladness, making the air ring with their merry voices. Old men are there, leaning on a trusty staff, or perhaps the arm of a sturdy

truth, the hope and support of their waning years ; happy mothers lead on their smiling children ; young and lovely maidens, though watched by eyes that never slack their vigilance, contrive, as they walk along, to give such play to the jealous veil, that it shall not wholly conceal their charms. The jocund throngs pour in a stream through the streets, which, arched with verdant branches, and festooned with garlands, present a strangely picturesque appearance. The massive ramparts, manned with noble striplings—the simple yet tasteful temples—the palace of the king—the rising greatness of infant Rome, in turn excite their surprise, their admiration, and their applause. As they proceed, they are met by a horseman of imposing mien, Romulus,—the founder of the city,—who, amidst hearty shouts, and strains of rude but stirring music, leads the way, with his guards and courtiers, to the spacious circus, expressly constructed for the games of the day. But a wild cry interrupts and terminates the peaceful spectacle. The Roman youths have seized on the stranger maidens, and, regardless of the threats and remonstrances of their parents, and their own moving entreaties, sweep them in a body from the arena. One damsel of surpassing beauty, whose veil had been torn from her face, becomes an object of fierce contention ; and the enamoured Romans strive with each other for the prize, till a warrior more daring than the rest, waving aloft his naked sword, spurs into the midst of the throng, snatches the terrified girl in his arms, and shouting his name of Thalassius, triumphantly bears her off. He is pursued by a hundred competitors ; but a troop of armed horsemen, his kinsmen and adherents, gather round him, and still crying “Thalassius ! Thalassius !” secure his flight.

Another scene quickly succeeds, when the incensed

Sabines, after a solemn invocation of the gods, appeal for justice and for revenge to the stern fiat of the sword. The two armies are already engaged, the arrows fly in clouds through the air, shields ring with the clash of arms and the shock of mortal strife; but such sounds and such terrors, accompanied by the groans of the wounded and the dying, cannot overcome the holy devotion of woman. The two hosts are suddenly arrested by a third but far different party, who rush between the hostile ranks, their garments rent and soiled, their long hair falling in dishevelled tresses, their hands clasped in mute supplication, their eyes streaming with tears. On one side, instead of enemies, they behold their husbands: the other claims from them the dutiful love of children. They passionately adjure them to recognise these ties, and sheathe their angry weapons; and, touched by their heroism, the contending legions become at once brothers and allies on the field of battle.

We might linger for a moment by the mournful bier of Lucretia, when, bending over her bleeding corpse, Brutus swore to avenge the outrage committed on Rome; or stand between the columns of the Forum, and watch the discomfiture and dismay of Appius, as the beautiful Virginia, in the first glow of her youth and bloom, in the presence of her betrothed lover, and in front of the tribunal of judgment, fell beneath the knife of her distracted father. But these incidents are too familiar to call for description: they are the earliest lessons of every mind; and show us, by examples too awful to be forgotten, how highly female purity was regarded in Rome, at a time when virtue was the proud, almost the distinguishing characteristic of the Roman citizen.

Women were encouraged to pursue an unblemished life, and to evince zeal and devotion for their country,

by public rewards, or by some special mark of popular favour. The festival of the *Matronalia* was instituted in honour of the Sabine matrons, and the names of the patriotic women who presented their trinkets for the use of the Commonwealth, in a time of universal distress, were, by order of the senate, inscribed on cups of gold, placed on the altar of the Capitol. Those who were conspicuous for their virtues became enshrined in the memory of the people: funeral orations, reciting and commending their excellent qualities, were pronounced over their graves; their names were perpetuated as household words, and are still preserved for the veneration of posterity.

The early generations of matrons, the mothers of Rome, partook largely of the deep religious spirit which then characterized the whole nation. The most pleasing duty of the young maiden was to walk in the sacred processions, to join in the chorus of female minstrels, to strew flowers on the marble floor of the temple, or to hang garlands round the altar. At the festival of Bacchus, a band of young girls, selected from the most honourable families of Rome, traversed the principal streets, bearing in baskets of gold the mysterious emblems of the divinity, concealed beneath clustering wreaths of vine, ivy, and myrtle. The matrons, with touching ingenuousness, confided their inmost thoughts and dearest wishes to the ear of their tutelary goddess. To Vesta they prayed for life and health; to Juno for prosperity; to Venus, their especial benefactress, for the blessings and the gifts of domestic life. It was in Cytherea's temple, according to Juvenal, that the Roman matron besought the goddess, in orthodox whispers, as the ancient formulary prescribed, to endow her children with grace, symmetry, and beauty. She made offerings of flowers at the shrine of

Juno, and repeated her daily vows and orisons before the guardian Genius of the family.

But this religion, instead of elevating, corrupted or perverted the minds of its disciples. The morals of the early Romans were severe, but they were based on a false and pernicious principle. Woman was taught to consider herself a slave, and to act as one ; for in the hour of conscious weakness, when nature arms her with an innate strength, it was deemed honourable and heroic, instead of bravely facing calamity, to seek a coward's refuge in death. Thus, under certain circumstances, suicide was absolutely held to be a duty ; and Portia swallowing fire, Sophonisba receiving from her lover the cup of poison, Arria gashing her breast with her husband's dagger, though rendered more striking by the halo of history, were, in fact, but common incidents in the domestic life of Rome.

Happy had it been for the imperial city if the perversion of their daughters had stopped here ; but what is wrong in principle, even when prompted by a feeling of rectitude, must, in the end, pervade the whole mind with its evil influence. Brought up with the belief that it was proper and becoming, in particular situations, to cast off by suicide the sacred obligations of life, woman, familiarized with death, began to seek relief from oppression, or a hateful union, by murder. During the consulates of Marcellus and Valerius, a virulent distemper made its appearance in Rome, which, baffling every precaution, carried off a number of the principal citizens in a manner singularly mysterious. While the city was overwhelmed with consternation, a maid-servant presented herself before Fabius Maximus, the curile ædile, and offered, if secured from personal harm, and the vengeance of those she would have to denounce, to disclose the cause of the

mortality. The public faith being pledged for her protection, she asserted that all who had died so mysteriously were the victims of poison ; and, through her means, a number of women, including twenty respectable matrons, and two of high patrician rank, named Cornelia and Iergia, were detected in the very act of compounding drugs for the purpose she stated. They were instantly conveyed to the Forum ; and, on their examination, alleging that the drugs were wholesome, they were urged to demonstrate the fact by partaking of the preparation, which, after a consultation, they agreed to do, and deliberately quaffing the poisoned draught, expired where they stood. These, however, were not the only persons implicated, and, further inquiries being instituted, the guilty practice was traced to a hundred and seventy matrons of the best families of Rome, who were all condemned to death, and underwent the ignominy of a public execution.

But the evil was not eradicated ; and the art of poisoning, at first confined to a few, soon became a fashionable study, and its practice a popular vice. Juvenal warns the parents of Rome that their daughters will speedily be presented with the death-cup, or perhaps strangled in the night, if their husbands, who are bound to them by such slender ties, are to gain a legacy at their decease. He admonishes the husband to be careful how he partakes of the meats dressed by his wife, the son to refrain, if possible, from the dainties prepared by his mother. The removal of stepsons by poison was an every-day occurrence ; and Pontia, the wife of Drymis, deliberately poisoned her own children, and then committed suicide. The Empress Cesonia administered a deadly potion to her uncle, and successively poisoned all who incurred her enmity, including many senators and knights. The crime

pervaded every rank, from the crowned head to the slave; and the palace and the hovel were equally infected, and equally the scenes of danger.

Poison was sometimes given unintentionally in a love-philter. These potions, even when most innocuous, produced a terrible effect on the frame, which, indeed, became permanently debilitated from their use. They were prepared with magical incantations; and consisted of extraordinary, though usually most potent and most noxious ingredients. The philter presented by Cesonia to the uncle of Nero contained an infusion from the forehead of a foal. The wretched man, after enduring intolerable agonies, became raving mad. Dotage, mental oblivion, dizziness of the brain, delirium, with convulsions and paralysis, were the results ultimately produced by these fearful distillations; and fortunate indeed was the recipient who escaped with his senses.

This was not the only means by which the Roman lady, instead of trusting to the influence of her charms, sought to inspire the tender passion. Incantations and superstitious observances were a still more common resource; and the Phrygian or Indian soothsayer, who could discern the course of true love in the stars, or the Jewish sorceress, who could read a lady's fate in her face—decidedly the safest criterion, were only too frequently consulted. Women of humbler means learnt their destiny from the fortune-teller of the Circus, who, after they had walked slowly round the whole circumference of the arena, between the double row of columns, was able to elicit the required information from the inequalities of their foreheads, or the lines of their hands.

Ladies who had recourse to such mystic agencies were particularly careful to carry out, in every detail, the suggestions and injunctions of their occult adviser. Before

proceeding on a journey, they looked into the calendar of Thrasyllus, the teacher and astrologer of Tiberius ; they dared not anoint their eyes till they had referred to their horoscope, and only rose from their couch in the morning at a lucky hour. Wretched indeed was their plight, if, from accident or forgetfulness, they put forth their left foot first ; and a single look cast behind, utterly destroyed the spell.

These harmless, though ridiculous practices, were chiefly annoying to their observers ; but superstition begins with trifles, and invariably ends with enormities. From the darkened closet of the astrologer, the Roman lady, growing bolder in error, descended to the cave of the sorceress, who, disdaining the entrails of a bird, drew her auguries from the reeking heart of a child, offered as a sacrifice to the infernal gods.

Children were easily procured for these abominable and horrible rites. Infanticide, the usual result of imperfect marriage ties, which are not more subversive of conjugal than of parental affection, was fearfully prevalent, and, till a late period, was not forbidden by the laws. But many who, in the worst times, shrank from imbruing their hands in blood, unscrupulously abandoned their children at night, in some lonely part of the city. The spot ordinarily chosen was the Herb Market, at the foot of the Aventine ; and here infants could be purchased for any purpose, or carried off by the first comers. A mother, dissatisfied with the personal appearance of her child, selected here one more suited to her taste, and whose beauty, set off by gems and purple, would sustain the credit of her lineage, while her own despised infant shared, as a foundling, the chain of the slave.

But we can glance but briefly at the guilt and turpitude of the empire, and must draw a veil over the

wickedness of Agrippina, the incredible vice of Messalina, and the profligacy of Statilia. Marriage, anciently a solemn religious ceremony, however it might have been abused, had now become a mere name. Frequently even the deed of covenant and the ten witnesses were dispensed with, and the venerable usages of antiquity were treated with contempt and ridicule. Both parties were invested with the prerogative of divorce, and could dissolve by a word, a stroke of the pen, or a wave of the hand, the most precious institution of society and of religion.

The habits, employments, and even the amusements of the Roman matrons, of the highest as well as the lowest grades, had originally been of the simplest kind. Livy describes Lucretia as sitting in the midst of her maidens, busily engaged with her spindle, when she was surprised at a late hour of the night, by the appearance of her husband and his friends. Juvenal reminds the ladies of the empire that the matrons of the olden time had hardened their delicate hands with spinning, weaving and carding wool. In his day, the only spinning-women he mournfully observes, are the lowest poor, who earn a scanty subsistence under the shelter of the ramparts. Women had thrown aside the housewife's distaff for the dumb-bells, the boxing-gloves, and the foils. Some noble ladies, it is true, still condescended to superintend their households: they carefully noted the domestic expenses of the day in a private diary, kept a vigilant watch over the steward and the cook, and sentenced every offending servant to the lash of the flagellator. At her toilet, the patrician dame, sitting before her brazen mirror, was generally provided with a whip made of cowhide, which she applied over the naked shoulders of her trembling tire-woman, if a single hair were turned awry. She

practised singing, and gaily struck the lyre, while her slaves, by her order, were, for some petty fault, writhing under the scourge of the tormentor ; and their cries and her measured cadences rose discordantly together. The powerful carried these outrages to still greater lengths ; and their poorer neighbours, unprotected by the laws, which recognised might as right, were seized by their obedient slaves, dragged into the streets, beaten with rods and clubs, and sometimes fatally injured, for the mere gratification of their spleen.

By the statutes of the Twelve Tables, wine, as an intoxicating drink, which led to the most dangerous excesses, was wholly forbidden to women ; and, in the first days of the commonwealth, the favourite draught of the Roman matron was milk. This was succeeded by a medium beverage, called *passum*, which was extracted from raisins, and drunk at festivals, or at household merrymakings, as an extraordinary treat. Ultimately the senate enacted a law permitting a moderate indulgence of the juice of the grape to women past their thirtieth year ; but the license once granted, wine was partaken of openly by ladies who were far from claiming that venerable age. The use was soon converted into abuse ; and Roman matrons were accused by the spiteful Juvenal of imbibing such deep draughts of Falernian, that their delicate mouths, urged irresistibly from within, discharged the surplus quantity in a cascade on the floor, something after the manner of the ancient Egyptian dames, as depicted in the tableaux on their tombs. A flagon of old wine before dinner, was a small measure for one of these fair bacchanals, and frequently a second pint was drained, not to quench her thirst, but to give a little gentle stimulus to her appetite, that she might discuss her repast with more decided relish.

While the men of Rome were universally tainted with effeminacy, insomuch that even the great Pompey recoiled from touching his flowing hair with his finger, for fear of deranging a curl, the women, as before observed, delighted in manly exercises and games. Fencing was an ordinary accomplishment of the leading fashionable ladies of the empire. With their legs sheathed in half-armour, a corslet of steel over their too tender bosoms, a sword-belt round their waists, a helmet on their heads, and gauntlets drawn over their small white hands, they received every morning a lesson from a practised gladiator, who taught them the guard, the lounge, and all the other postures of the martial science. Before them stood a plastron, or wooden figure, which was the object of their hostility, and which, by the time their daily lesson was finished, presented more gashes than the body of Cæsar. At length they threw down the sword, and, weary and jaded, drew over their melting frames a woollen cloak, called an endromis, and retired exhausted to their boudoirs.

But ladies did not always confine these athletic performances to the practice-room. After a careful training they made their appearance in public, in the Circus or the Amphitheatre, as competitors for the prize ; and contended with each other, or even with men, in mortal strife. In the reign of Domitian, ladies actually fought in the arena with wild beasts, and the custom remained in vogue for many years, till the emperor Severus, among other wise reforms of the public morals, enacted a law prohibiting such unseemly spectacles. Matrons, however, were still permitted to box and wrestle, and a lady's black eyes were then understood in a sense very different from what is now expressed by the term.

The toilet of a Roman lady involved an elaborate an-

very costly process. It commenced at night, when the face, supposed to have been tarnished by exposure, was overlaid with a poultice, composed of boiled or moistened flour, spread on with the fingers. Poppæan unguents sealed the lips, and the body was profusely rubbed with Cerona ointment. In the morning the poultice and unguents were washed off; a bath of asses' milk imparted a delicate whiteness to the skin; and the pale face was freshened and revived with enamel. The full eyelids, which the Roman lady still knows so well how to use—now suddenly raising them, to reveal a glance of surprise or of melting tenderness, now letting them drop, like a veil, over the lustrous eyes—the full, rounded eyelids were coloured within, and a needle dipped in jetty dye gave length and sphericity to the eyebrows. The forehead was encircled by a wreath, or fillet, fastened in the luxuriant hair, which rose in front in a pyramidal pile, formed of successive ranges of curls, and giving the appearance of more than ordinary height:—

“ So high she builds her head, she seems to be,
View her in front, a tall Andromache;
But walk all round her, and you'll quickly find
She's not so great a personage behind.”

Roman ladies frequented the public baths, and it was not unusual for dames of the highest rank to resort to these lavatories in the dead hour of the night. Seated in a palanquin, or sedan, borne by sturdy chairmen, and preceded by slaves bearing flambeaux, they made their way through the deserted streets, delighted to arouse and alarm their neighbours. A close chair conveyed the patrician matron to the spectacles and shows, to which she always repaired in great state, surrounded by her servants and slaves, the dependents of her husband, and the clients of her house, all wearing the badge of the

particular faction she espoused. The factions of the Circus were four in number, and were distinguished by their respective colours of Blue, Green, White, and Red, to which Domitian, who was a zealous patron of the Circensian games, added the less popular hues of Gold and Purple. But the spectators generally attached themselves either to the Blue or the Green ; and the latter was the chief favourite, numbering among its adherents emperors and empresses, senators, knights, and noble dames, as well as the great mass of the people, who, when their champions were defeated, carried their partisanship to such an extreme, that the streets were repeatedly deluged with the blood of the Blues ; and more than once, the safety of the state was imperilled by these disgraceful commotions.

The public walks and gardens were a fashionable resort of the Roman ladies. Here they presented themselves in rich costume, which bore testimony alike to the wealth of their husbands and their own taste. A yellow tie, or hood, partly covered, but did not conceal, their piled hair ; their vest of muslin, or sarcenet, clasped with gems, was draped with a murre-coloured robe, descending to their high-heeled Greek boots ; necklaces of emerald hung from their swan-like necks, and jewelled ear-rings from their ears. Diamonds glittered on their fingers and their dazzling complexions were shielded from the sun by a parasol.

Etiquette did not prohibit ladies from stopping in their promenade, and entering into conversation ; and the incidents of the day, the latest performance at the Circus or the Amphitheatre, the newest ode of Horace, or the last satire of the wicked story-telling Juvenal, the caustic Persius, or the bitter Lucilius, furnished abundant topics for discourse. Evermore, too, there was some new, and

alas ! some dreadful scandal on the town, which loosened the tongues of both rich and poor. Then there were fashions to discuss, costumes to examine and criticise, ladies' charms to survey, and—task too easy for experienced matrons !—to pull to pieces. Themes of a more abstruse character were selected by some of the sex—the blue-stockings of the age, who were especially singled out for the poet's ire :—

“ ——— She is more intolerable yet,
 Who plays the critic when at table set ;
 Calls Virgil charming, and attempts to prove
 Poor Dido right, in venturing all for love.
 From Maro and Mæonides she quotes
 The striking passages, and, while she notes
 Their beauties and defects, adjusts her scales,
 And accurately weighs which bard prevails.
 Th' astonished guests sit mute : grammarians yield,
 Loud rhetoricians, baffled, quit the field.”

But the social meetings of the Romans were not strange to the gifts and accomplishments which more particularly appertain to women ; and the high-born maiden, as a part of her education, was carefully instructed in music, singing, and dancing, and required to display her grace and her efficiency on festive occasions. Horace mentions the flute as one of the instruments played by women ; but their performances were usually confined to the lyre and harp. Women of the humbler class, after a regular course of instruction, could obtain a livelihood on the stage ; and in the time of Horace, three famous and accomplished actresses—Origo, Cytheris, and Arbascula, all remarkable for their charms and their genius, were the reigning toasts of Rome.

Amidst the follies, the vices, and the crimes of the empire, one figure stands out, in bright relief, from the universal social demoralization, and exhibits the character

of woman in a beautiful and sublime light. Zenobia, wife of Odenathus, King of Palmyra, united to singular personal beauty all the high and engaging qualities of the heart—the virtues of the wife and mother with the stern chivalry of the heroine. Her dark complexion was tinged with a warm red, softened by the light of her beaming eyes; her teeth glistened like pearls; and the ear was enchained by the melting sweetness of her voice. The city of Palmyra, an oasis amidst the sands of Arabia—a gem in the desert, was the favourite residence of Zenobia and her husband, the seat of their government, and the capital of their dominions. Groves of stately palms overshadowed the streets of this delightful town; and cool fountains, fed by springs, threw up their waters in perpetual jets, which at once supplied the necessities of the residents, and quenched the thirst of the jaded traveller. Palaces and temples, adorned by the hand of Grecian art, presented themselves at conspicuous points; a theatre was provided for the dramas of Sophocles, and baths for the health and comfort of the people. Deprived by assassination of the consort she so tenderly loved, Zenobia here assumed the sceptre of the East, seized and executed the assassin, reduced the disobedient to order, and, though surrounded by difficulties, guided the shattered bark of the state through every danger. In this task she was assisted by the advice and influence of the gifted Longinus, her friend and preceptor, under whose tutelage she had become mistress of several languages and acquired a profound knowledge of the philosophy of Greece. But such pursuits, while they refined, did not relax or enervate her character; and, after spending an allotted portion of the day in literary studies, she threw by the pen for the sword, and underwent the rude training of a soldier. The very habiliments of her sex were

discarded, and, attired in a military costume, she appeared on her Arab charger in the midst of her troops, or marched on foot at their head. She personally encountered the Emperor Aurelian in two pitched battles, fought respectively at Antioch and Emessa, and in both was victorious, till her soldiers, carried away by their ardour, were destroyed by a masterly ambuscade. Driven from the field, she took refuge in Palmyra, and scornfully rejecting an offer of terms, defended her desert city with inflexible courage. But reduced to the last ebb, and finding that Aurelian, instead of losing strength, had received large reinforcements, and an inexhaustible store of supplies, the intrepid Queen resolved to seek safety in flight. The step, however, was not destined to be fortunate. Sixty miles from Palmyra, as she was about to ford the broad channel of the Euphrates, she was surrounded by the light cavalry of Aurelian, and the fair sovereign of the East became the captive of Rome.

Would that the story of her life might end here; but to the tale of woman's heroism, we must add the moral of woman's weakness. In the presence of the Emperor, surrounded by his scowling myrmidons, and with the tumultuous cries and threats of the soldiers ringing in her ear, the trembling Zenobia forgot that she was herself a Queen. After a moment of dignified firmness, she no longer concealed her terror, but sought to excuse her own temerity by denouncing her friends. Longinus, who had so zealously devoted himself to her cause, was among the number thus accused, and, condemned by Aurelian, died majestically on the scaffold, while his unhappy pupil was reserved to walk in the Emperor's triumph, a chained and degraded captive, through the streets of Rome.

So fallen was the character of the Romans, that they could contemplate and applaud an ovation, in which the

principal figure was a vanquished queen, whose only crime was her heroism and her virtues. But this incident was not forgotten by fate, when achieving a tardy revenge ; and the ascendancy of the imperial city, so long on the decline, was ultimately assailed by a more formidable enemy, whom an injured and oppressed woman called to its gates.

Honoria, the sister of Valentinian, a princess endowed with every personal attraction, was educated in the citadel palace of Ravenna, where the fears of the craven Emperor had provided for himself and his family an inaccessible retreat. Promoted while a child to the rank of Augusta, it was thought that her exalted position would raise her above the solicitations, or even the ambition, of the highest subject, and so prevent her forming an alliance which, in her royal brother's estimation, would be dangerous to the peace and security of the crown. But these hopes were frustrated by the discovery, through her maternal position, of her attachment for Eugenius, her chamberlain ; and the unhappy princess was hurried away, in her sixteenth year, to the distant shores of the Bosphorus, and there immured in the cell of a nun. For fourteen years she remained in this situation, when she conceived the bold design of despatching a messenger to Attila, king of the Huns, with an offer of her hand, her patrimony, and her imperial rights, which she invited him to claim from the Emperor and senate of Rome. The lover she thus invoked was the most odious and cruel of the barbarian enemies of her country. "Scourge of God" was the impious title which this monster in human form delighted to bear ; and it was his constant boast, that the grass never grew where his horse had trod. His personal appearance, while it indicated his Tartar origin, bespoke the savage ferocity of his habits and disposition. His

dark, tanned complexion kindled under the flash of his small, fierce, indented eyes, which, he failed not to observe, struck terror into the beholder ; his nose was broad and flat ; his mouth large ; and a bunch of stunted hairs, sprinkled over his chin, offered a poor apology for a beard. The murder of his brother Bleda inaugurated the long series of atrocities which have stamped his name on the page of history in characters of blood, and lead us to the awful conclusion, accepted and believed by himself, that he was one of the five conquerors so emphatically foretold in the prophecies of the Revelation. The terrible names of Alaric, Genseric, Tamerlane, and Zenghis may assuredly be received as denoting the others.

Humanity, indeed, after an interval of a thousand years, looks back with a shudder at the fearful ravages of these bloody-minded men ; and we may truly exclaim that, "except the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved." The fate of woman during this period surpassed anything that we can now imagine, and was such as, though it could not soften man, might almost have moved fiends to pity. It is difficult to realize the devastation and destruction which was spread over the fairest and most fruitful regions of Asia, Africa, and Europe. "In those desert countries," says St. Jerome, "*nothing was left except the sky and the earth* ; and after the destruction of cities and the extirpation of the human race, the land was overgrown with thick forests and inextricable brambles, and the universal desolation announced by the prophet Zephaniah was accomplished, *in the scarcity of the beasts, the birds, and even of the fish.*"

Alaric, king of the Goths, was the first to overrun and devastate the classic soil of Italy. His irruption was repelled, after several fierce battles, by the intrepid Stilicho, who still supported the renown of the Roman

name. The Burgundians, the Suevi, and the Vandals, aided by the savage horsemen of the Alani, and ruthless swarms from the shores of the Baltic, next made their appearance in the passes of the Alps, and followed the banner of their brutal chief, Rhadagast, to the gates of Florence. Here they were assailed by Stilicho, who, after a sanguinary engagement, cut their proudest battalions in pieces, and captured and beheaded their king. But the death of the Roman general removed the great barrier to the subjugation of his country; and Alaric, reinforced by auxiliary and dependent tribes, marched in irresistible strength through the desolated peninsula, and pitched his tent on the banks of the Tiber. His lines were soon extended round the whole circumference of the city, which covered an area of twenty-one miles, and the miserable inhabitants, twelve hundred thousand in number, cut off from all communication with the surrounding country, and but ill-supplied with provisions, were doomed to sustain a protracted siege. The ordinary articles of food were quickly exhausted; horse-flesh rose into a sumptuous delicacy, only obtainable by the rich; and so frightful was the famine, that human beings fed on the bodies of their fellow-creatures. A still darker crime, foretold as a special incident of the siege of Jerusalem, is attributed to this fatal epoch; and Roman mothers are accused of having outraged the first laws of nature by feasting on the bodies of their murdered children. Nor were the barbarities and impious excesses of the time confined to individuals. A sudden rumour that the venerable Serena, a princess of the royal house of Theodosius, and the widow of Stilicho, who had been twice saluted as the Deliverer of Italy, was in secret correspondence with the enemy, exasperated and maddened both the soldiery and the populace. While the unhappy

lady was yet unconscious of her danger, her palace was surrounded by the clamorous multitude; the emissaries of the senate burst into her chamber, and without listening to her defence, without inquiring into her guilt, consigned her to the hands of the public executioner. The mob learnt, with a yell of triumph, that the innocent object of their hostility had been strangled.

We must pass by the horrors of the sack, when the pitiless army of Alaric gained possession of the city; for though the narrative is not untinctured with woman's heroism, it is too deeply coloured by her wrongs. Many, indeed, perished by their own hand, to escape a fate still more terrible, and not a few fell in a wholesale and indiscriminate massacre. Yet the Goths were not inaccessible to gentler impulses; and an instance is recorded of a barbarian youth, who, in the height of the sack, was so touched by the heroism of a Roman lady, that he generously took her under his protection, conveyed her to a place of refuge, and afterwards delivered her uninjured to her husband.

The invasion of Attila found a specious pretext in the peremptory refusal of the hand of Honoria, for which a forced marriage with a nominal husband was urged as an excuse. But the pusillanimous Emperor and abject senate, while they clung to the tradition of past greatness, abdicated their functions at the first approach of the invader. Terrible indeed was the warning which every breeze wafted before his blood-stained banner; and, on the very threshold of Italy, the proud cities of Aquileia, Vicenza, Verona, and Bergamo, were converted by his hordes into heaps of stones. But as he came in sight of the venerable walls of Rome, his march was arrested, not by an army, but by a Christian bishop, who, with words of peace and amity, backed by rich gifts from the altars

of the Church, and a promise of the hand of Honoria, adjured the self-dubbed Scourge of God to abandon the threatened assault. The sagacious Leo touched at once the chords of superstition, the feelings of ambition and vanity, and the more sordid impulses of avarice in the steel breast of the Hun ; and Attila furled his standard, when he was reminded that Alaric, in the plenitude of his power, expiated by a premature death his desecration of Rome. Soon he was on his way to the frontier, though vehemently declaring that he would exact a fearful revenge, if he were not speedily recognised as the husband of Honoria.

Another bride awaited the conqueror at his rude palace on the Danube. Ildico, a Roman maiden of enchanting beauty, torn from her home and her betrothed lover, was here united to the savage enemy of her country and her sex. A night of intemperance and brutal riot was succeeded by a serene day, which, to the superstitious Huns, had something awful in its impassive calm. The King's chamber, to which he had been conducted with such noisy shouts, remained closed, darkened, and silent. At length, his impatient chiefs began to clamour without ; the unguarded door was flung open ; and they beheld on the gorgeous nuptial couch the lifeless body of him, who, but the day before, had made the world tremble. A blood-vessel had broken on his lungs, and the fierce Attila had reached the marriage-chamber only to fall dead at the feet of his bride.

While the chief of the Huns had been urged to invade Italy by the entreaties and attractions of the Princess Honoria, Genseric, King of the Vandals—a barbarian, if possible more cruel and more implacable—received a similar invitation from the Empress Eudoxia. The weak and guilty Valentinian had conceived a violent passion for

the wife of Petronius Maximus, a lady not more distinguished for her beauty than her virtue, and who, unmoved by the splendid rank of her lover, treated his overtures with indignant scorn. In an unfortunate moment, Maximus, indulging in the prevailing rage for play, lost a considerable sum to Valentinian, and, with a rude jest, the Emperor demanded his signet-ring as a pledge for its payment. This he despatched to the lady in the name of her husband, requiring her immediate attendance at the palace, and the wretched Maximus, on his return home, learnt the full extent of his misfortune. Smothering his resentment, he waited patiently for an opportunity of revenge, and an occasion soon presented itself, when Valentinian, stained with the blood of the illustrious Ætius, and branded with a thousand crimes, was assassinated on the Field of Mars. The clamorous shouts of the soldiery bestowed the vacant diadem on Maximus, who, bearing an irreproachable character, was equally acceptable to the senate and the people. His injured wife, whose fate had impelled him to such a bloody course, did not live to witness his elevation, and he was no sooner invested with the purple, than he forcibly espoused the Empress Eudoxia, the widow of the murdered Valentinian. This was the outrage that provoked Eudoxia to appeal to the doubtful magnanimity of Genseric, who, after ravaging the fairest provinces of Europe, from the Baltic to the Mediterranean, had waded through a sea of blood to the throne of Carthage. The Vandal tyrant had before cast a longing eye towards Italy, and now hastened to obey a summons which enrolled him as the champion and defender of a woman and an Empress. Maximus would not idly have awaited his approach, could he have commanded the adhesion and support of al oyal people ; but his appearance in public was the signal for an insurrection

in which, through the treachery of his attendants, the partisans and creatures of Eudoxia, he fell a victim to the fury of the populace. Eudoxia herself, accompanied by her two youthful daughters, advanced to meet the invader, while the city, in spite of the mediation of the great Leo, who again endeavoured to appease and conciliate the conqueror, was given up to the unsparing pillage of the Vandals. The riches of Rome were hastily accumulated; the churches were stripped of their treasures, including the sacred vessels of the temple of Jerusalem, which in a prouder and brighter age, had been deposited in the capital by Titus; and the whole was immediately embarked in the crowded transports of Genseric. A still more humiliating portion of the spoil was a mournful throng of women, the wives and daughters of the degenerate Romans, conveyed in shameful bondage to the shores of Africa; and among these miserable captives were Eudoxia and her daughters, the descendants of the great Theodosius, and the empress and coheirs of the civilized world.

XI.

THE CHRISTIAN AND BYZANTINE EMPIRE.

WHILE the gorgeous sun of Rome was sinking in *the* ocean of time, a brighter light, destined never to *set*, slowly arose in the East, and, at length, spread wide *over* the earth on the wings of another morning.

Christianity numbered women among its first *converts*; and at a time when the Saviour had nowhere to lay *his* head, he received consolation and succour from his *female*

disciples. Hence the most touching episodes of the Gospel refer to women ; and the penitent of Samaria at Jacob's well, listening to the divine words of the Redeemer —the Magdalen at his feet, washing them with her tears, Mary and Martha at their brother's grave, the sorrowing relatives that "stood by the Cross," when the followers of sterner mould "forsook him and fled ;" and lastly, the weeping mourners at the sepulchre, are pictures by which the mind is willingly enchained, and which, once contemplated, can never be forgotten.

The new religion had much to attract and to rivet the earnest affection of woman ; its precepts sank into her heart, while, in their effect, they purified and reclaimed her soul. Patience, endurance, submission, were virtues, indeed, which she had long had to practise, but they were now required equally from the other sex, and enforced by a divine example. What the false standard of man's fallen nature had represented as chivalry, or as heroism, was now pronounced to be violence, blood-guiltiness, and sin ; and humanity was taught the beautiful lesson of yielding itself to the hand of God, of suffering even wrong in silence, and of returning good for evil. A blameless and holy life, not only in demeanour, in words, and in action, but in the thoughts, in the inmost soul, was mildly, but rigidly demanded ; and woman found at the foot of the Cross both temporal and eternal redemption.

But the great mass of the world was not to be easily penetrated by such a leaven ; and so early as the age of the Apostles, we meet, in the eloquent epistles of St. Paul, with but too many instances of its incorrigible depravity. It is the characteristic of all human societies, that some are ever inclined to fall back, some are eager for change, and continually thirst for novelty, and some are carried away by every wind of doctrine ; and hence, in course of

time, arise the most deplorable errors, diversities of opinion, discord, dissensions, and schisms, which rend the nearest and dearest ties. But the pure flame of Christianity continued to burn unclouded for four hundred years : it survived the three great persecutions ; and was only obscured, or rather corrupted, by the blighting protection of Constantine.

Helena, the mother of that ruthless Emperor, whom the Roman Catholic church admitted to the dubious honours of canonization, as a benefactress and saint, was animated by a fervent zeal for the propagation of the faith ; but to achieve this object, she employed unsuitable and unworthy means. Her observant eye quickly perceived that the spirituality of her creed, the innate testimony to its heavenly origin, was the greatest obstacle to its universal acceptance, since minds enveloped in pagan darkness clung to the delusion of a palpable god ; and to obviate such a difficulty, she resolved, instead of seeking to raise mankind to the level of Christianity, to sink Christianity to the level of mankind. Accordingly she gave orders for the construction of a cross, which was secretly buried, and then, as if under inspiration, disinterred, and solemnly pronounced to be the True Cross, on which the Redeemer had suffered ; and, as such, declared to be a fit object of reverence, and set up for the worship of the world. Such was the origin of the adoration of the crucifix, which, however, was soon followed by other innovations, and the knee which bowed to a log of wood, was soon bent before the image of a saint, the bone of a martyr, a lock of hair, a tooth, or a napkin.

Among the Romans, as among the Jews, women *had* been the most active missionaries of Christianity ; *and*, through their instrumentality, it gained some of its *most* eminent and remarkable converts. Long before *the*

session of Constantine, many a Nicodemus had sat in a fallen senate of Rome, or at the council-board of the pagan Cæsars ; and it was doubtless the powerful organization of the Christian community, as much as any aged miracle, that kindled the light of an interested truth in the tyrant's soul. Nor did the pious zeal of a Roman diminish, when the infant Church, after being crushed in hardship, found itself wallowing in the downy lap of luxury. Athanasius, Jerome, Chrysostom—from his sequence called “the golden-mouthed”—had each their crowds of ministering Priscillas, who deemed their words inspired, and their decisions oracular. Pachonius established the first convent, in which women found a refuge from the vanities and the duties of life ; and his pernicious example was speedily followed by Athanasius, who, passing from Egypt to Rome, preached in the West the crusade of monastic discipline. The illustrious Paula, after lavishing immense sums on indigent and lazy monks, was herself tempted, by the zeal of Jerome, to enter a convent, and unfeelingly dedicated her daughter to the same bondage, receiving as a reward for her devotion the blasphemous appellation of mother-in-law of God. Royalty was not exempt from the conventual yoke ; and the Empress Pulcheria, though she shared her throne with the prudent Marcian, as her nominal husband, remained a nun throughout her life. The fair Melania threw her fate into the abyss of monkish cupidity, that treasury without a bottom, yet could scarcely satisfy its inordinate ravings ; and a Benedictine friar, whom indolence or enury had driven to the cloister, candidly avowed, that his vow of poverty had given him a hundred thousand crowns a year, and his vow of obedience raised him to the rank of a sovereign prince.”

In the reign of Valentinian, the spoliation of the pro-

perty of devout women by rapacious monks and priests, who had obtained the direction of their consciences, was carried to such an extent, that severe laws were enacted for the suppression of the evil ; and a confessor was incapacitated from receiving any legacy or bequest from his fair penitents. Still, means were found to evade the statutes ; and Damasus, Bishop of Rome, their guardian and administrator, was himself so deeply implicated in such proceedings, that he acquired the odious sobriquet of "the ladies' ear-scratcher." St. Jerome does not escape a similar imputation, and he was assuredly not wanting in zeal for the aggrandizement of the Church.

These pages must not be sullied with any details of the lamentable depravity which soon characterized the religious houses, and extorted from the sixth general council, after the clearest evidence, more stringent rules for their regulation and reformation. The moral rottenness of Christians, indeed, was not confined to the convents ; it was equally apparent in the laity, and pervaded the whole mass of the sinking empire. But while mankind threw aside the spirit, they claimed implicit adhesion for the letter of Christianity, according as it was interpreted by particular individuals ; and the Trinitarians, Arians, and Nestorians, were all bent, not only on obtaining the ascendancy, but the absolute universal acceptance of their conflicting tenets. Women took a large share in the raging controversies, which, like most religious disputes, terminated in persecutions ; and Christians, no longer dreading a Nero or a Domitian, now openly crucified and burnt each other. The naked bodies of matrons and noble maidens were, by means of pulleys, hoisted into the air, with a weight attached to their feet ; and in this ignominious posture, their tender flesh was torn with red-hot pincers, lashed with scourges,

and coated with plates of burning iron. Christian contending with Christian, washed the broad streets of Rome and Constantinople with Christian blood ; and in a sectarian riot at Alexandria, ferocity ran so high, that the victors, after perpetrating the most savage butchery, positively devoured the mangled bodies of the slain. What a terrible realization of that warning prophecy—" I have not come to give peace, but a sword !"

Among the many victims of these unhappy tumults was Hypatia, a maiden not more distinguished for her beauty than for her learning and her virtues. Her father was Theon, the illustrious mathematician, and he had early initiated his daughter in the mysteries of philosophy. The classic groves of Athens and the schools of Alexandria equally applauded her attainments, and listened to the pure wisdom and the music of her lips. She respectfully declined the tender attentions of lovers ; but, raised to the chair of Gamaliel, suffered youth and age, without preference or favour, to sit indiscriminately at her feet. Her fame and increasing popularity ultimately excited the jealousy of St. Cyril, at that time Bishop of Alexandria, and her friendship for his antagonist Orestes, the prefect of the city, entailed on her devoted head the crushing weight of his enmity. In her way through the city, her chariot was surrounded by his creatures, headed by a crafty and savage fanatic named Peter the Reader ; and the young and innocent woman was dragged to the ground, stripped of her garments, paraded naked through the streets, and then torn limb from limb on the steps of the cathedral. The still warm flesh was scraped from her bones by oyster-shells, and the bleeding fragments thrown into a furnace, so that not an atom of the beautiful virgin should escape destruction.

St. Chrysostom provoked equal hostility by his eloquent

denunciations of the vices of the clergy, and their treacherous subjugation of the consciences and the too confiding hearts of their spiritual daughters. The dames and maidens of Constantinople were divided into two contending factions by his potent sermons, the one almost worshipping, the other bitterly detesting, their venerable bishop. His enemies ranged themselves under the odious banner of the Empress Eudoxia, whom he had imprudently stigmatized in the pulpit by the name of Jezebel, and their ranks included Marsa, Castricia, and Eugraphia, three patrician widows, infuriated by his bold exposures of fashionable depravity, and enabled by their wealth to extend the ramifications and sustain the energies of their party. The fair and saintly Olympias animated the hopes of his adherents, and afforded, in her pure and blameless life, a bright example of his doctrine. His own incomparable eloquence continually fired the populace, and when, by a scandalous abuse of power, Eudoxia procured from the weak Arcadius his deposition and exile, a devoted flock rose in defence of their shepherd, defeated and butchered the imperial guards, and exacted his instant recall. But the triumph of the virtuous bishop was of short duration; and Eudoxia, introducing into the city a host of barbarians, who terrified the people with the double infliction of sword and fire, succeeded in effecting his banishment and his ruin.

As the upper classes of society, and the religious bodies, were given up to contention, and lost to virtue, it could hardly be expected that we should find a high standard of morality in humbler life. Many causes combined, indeed, to vitiate and debase the lower orders, who, moreover, had before them the evil lives of the opulent, and were constantly tempted to follow their example. This was a matter, however, of which the

state took so little cognizance, that the very revenue was levied in such a manner as to fall with crushing weight on the poor ; and the tax called *gold of affliction* was frequently paid by working men, with the price of the bartered honour of their daughters.

Yet women of the lowest class were sometimes raised to the dignity of the imperial diadem. The famous Theodora, wife of Justinian, was the daughter of Acacius, a native of Cyprus, who, during the paternal reign of Anastasius, was master of the bears, kept for exhibition and slaughter at the public games. The death of Acacius left her mother a widow, when Theodora could not have been more than five years old, and at that age, she sat with her two sisters in the Circus, as a supplicant to the Green faction, to which their father had belonged, and which they hoped to interest in their favour. But the dead and the poor have few friends, and the little orphans received no countenance from the Greens, though the Blues were considerate and indulgent ; and this circumstance, at the time appearing so unimportant, was, in later years, the cause of many a fierce and bloody fray. As she grew up, Theodora, with her elder sister Comita, afterwards the mother of the Empress Sophia, earned a precarious livelihood on the stage, where her dawning charms soon attracted notice, commanded popular favour, and gradually involved her in the most frightful excesses. Yet the black soul of Theodora was clothed with a form which, by its wondrous symmetry and grace, might have denoted an angel of light. Small, but not diminutive, in stature, the exquisite proportion and delicate outline of her figure gave her an appearance of height ; and its lightness, its pliancy, its beautiful aptitude of posture and motion, had more of an ethereal than mortal character. Her complexion was pure and dazzling ; and she

possessed the rare power of throwing into her face all the varied emotions of the mind, giving it an animation and spirituality perfectly enchanting. Eyes soft and full, now bathing in their own light, now flashing with eager fire, charmed every beholder ; and the virtuous Roman—for such a character was still in existence—carefully shunned the street where she lodged, lest her basilisk glance should lure him to destruction.

With such high personal qualifications for the tragic branch of the profession, Theodora devoted herself to comedy ; and her success, as soon as she appeared in a prominent character, was so decided, that it furnishes indisputable warrant for her choice. This Jordan of ancient days had but to raise her eyes, to curl her cherry lip, to call up a gesture or mirthful look to her bewitching face, and the whole theatre, spectators and actors, burst into an uncontrollable roar ; and she covered the absence of even the most ordinary accomplishments, by the simple display of her rich natural gifts. Her infamous life at length drove her from the capital, in company with the prefect Ecebolus, from whom, however, by accident or design, she became separated in Egypt, where she was reduced to the greatest misery, if not actual want. But, in the midst of her distress, a strange, unaccountable notion had taken possession of her mind, that she was destined to become the wife of a monarch ; and, impelled by this idea, she once more turned her drooping eyes towards Constantinople, the scene of her former triumphs and degradation. History is not silent as to the means by which she was enabled to prosecute her journey, and which made the name of Theodora a by-word and reproach in every city of the East. The metropolis was reached at last ; and here, avoiding her ancient associates, she sought, for a time, to obtain a

livelihood by the labour of her hands, as a carder of wool, in which she succeeded till, in a fortunate hour, she attracted the attention of Justinian, when that acquaintance was commenced which led to her marriage with an emperor. In her honour the traditionary laws of the empire were abrogated, and she was solemnly recognised as the partner and colleague of Justinian, who declared that he received such a wife as the special gift of God.

But Theodora, raised to this giddy height, felt the ignominy of her early career, and, now that she was invested with the insignia of royalty, seldom presented herself in that magnificent city where she was so well remembered in another position. Yet no one dared to recall that too recent period, even by the faintest whisper; and doomed, indeed, was the tongue that, in an unguarded moment, was betrayed into such a treason. Alert spies caught up his accents, and quickly reported them to the enraged Empress, who, in executing her vengeance, stimulated the zeal of her myrmidon with these significant words—"If my orders are not fully obeyed, I swear by Him who liveth for ever, that your skin shall be flayed from your body."

Her stately palace on the sunny shore of the Bosphorus, reared its massive walls, crowned with cupolas and towers, over a labyrinth of dungeons, unknown to the functionaries of the empire, and accessible only to the guilty instruments of her will. Here, in some reeking vault, dimly lit by the flare of a torch, Theodora adjudged her victims to the rack, the scourge, or a secret death; and, forgetting every sentiment of her sex, calmly witnessed the execution of her commands. Then she ascended to the broad light of day, streaming through regal halls and gilded saloons, where art and untold wealth exhausted

their treasures to secure her ease, or minister to her luxury ; and a thousand slaves, in watchful and incessant attendance, flew to obey her capricious behests.

Fiction could invent no incident so strange as this evil woman, in the plenitude of earthly power, sitting on the imperial throne in the Hippodrome, where, in her childhood, she had appeared as a suppliant and beggar, to receive the homage of the Vandal King Gelimer, the captive of Belisarius. A glorious cortège led the way through the spacious area of the circus, and the barbarian monarch was blinded by the dazzling pomp and pageantry that surrounded the Empress of the East. The proud descendant of Genseric, who had made a spoil of Rome, bent his knee before the crowned Magdalen, and the illustrious Belisarius stooped to kiss the embroidered hem of her garment. Myriads of spectators acclaimed her name ; and saw, in the disgraceful spectacle, which attested their ruin and debasement, a resuscitation of the proud glories of purer times.

The crown which Justinian shared with Theodora was preserved to him by her wisdom and decision. Influenced by her partiality, he had adopted the colour and the cause of the Blue faction, in opposition to the Green, which, besides suspecting it of a secret attachment to the descendants of the Emperor Anastasius, she still regarded with the bitter hatred of early years. Imperial favour intoxicated the Blues, already impatient of the most necessary restraints of the law ; and Constantinople was kept in continual turmoil by the violence of these Christian janissaries. Proceeding from one outrage to another, they finally broke into the houses of the Greens, carried off their wives and daughters, including many of patrician rank, and committed horrors not to be described. By an unaccountable impulse, both factions then united

in an attempt to subvert the government ; and after five days of murder, rapine, and anarchy, Hypatius, the nephew of Anastasius, was dragged from his house, and, regardless of his own entreaties, and the tears of his wife, invested with the sovereign purple. The feeble and timid Justinian, instead of endeavouring to suppress the revolt, instantly prepared for flight, when he was diverted from his purpose by the courage of Theodora, who, entering the council-chamber, vehemently declared that she would never quit the palace. "Death," she continued, "is the condition of our birth ; but they who have reigned, should never survive the loss of dignity and dominion. I pray Heaven that I may never be seen without my diadem and purple : that I may no longer behold the light, when I cease to be saluted by the name of Queen. If you resolve, O Cæsar ! to fly, you have treasures : behold the sea, you have ships : but tremble lest the desire of life should expose you to a wretched exile and an ignominious death. For my part, I adhere to the opinion of antiquity, that the throne is a glorious tomb." Such heroic words from the mouth of a woman imparted a transient resolution to Justinian, and shamed, if they did not embolden, his distracted council. Three thousand veterans were hastily assembled, and despatched in two bodies, under the respective orders of Belisarius and Mundus, to engage the rebels. They made their way with difficulty through the burning city, over heaps of embers, and between falling and blazing houses, to the Hippodrome, where the rioters had congregated, and, entering by two opposite gates, fell on the surprised Greens, while the Blues, at sight of the banner of Justinian, returned to their allegiance, and joined in the slaughter of their late accomplices.

The foulest blot that rests on the memory of Theodora

is the murder of her son, the child of an unknown sire, who, at his death, when Theodora was the sovereign mistress of Asia, revealed to his unhappy offspring the secret of his parentage. Eager to push his fortune, the youth flew to Constantinople, as soon as the remains of his father were laid in the grave, and presented himself in the magnificent palace of his mother. There he, too, found a grave, whether in the dungeons beneath its floor, or the placid Bosphorus in its front, no human eye has been able to search out : but from the moment he entered the boudoir of Theodora, the child of shame disappeared for ever.

Theodora, in spite of fate and waning charms, maintained her ascendancy over Justinian to the last ; and after she had been twenty-four years his wife, he bewailed her death as sincerely and poignantly as if he had lost a blooming bride—the highest tribute, perhaps, that can be rendered to her unequal powers of fascination and deception.

At the same time that the Emperor was wedded to this Cyprian, his greatest and most illustrious subject espoused a woman of similar origin, the equal of Theodora in infamy, and occasionally the confidante of her intrigues, and the accomplice of her crimes. Antonina, as the lady was named, was the wife of Belisarius, who, in the greatness of his exploits, of his character, and of his sense of duty, was the Wellington of the East. Like Theodora, she had been cradled in the circus, and was the daughter of an ignoble woman, whose ostensible husband was a charioteer. Thus frailty was the heritage, as well as the name of Antonina, and remained through life her leading characteristic. After running the gauntlet of the stage, she entered the bondage of matrimony, and was a buxom widow, with a sturdy and gallant son, when, at a ripe

age, she accepted the suit of Belisarius. But years could not tame the unbridled temperament of a woman to whom vice had been as sustenance and nurture ; and in a short time, Belisarius was the only person in Constantinople who was ignorant of his wife's excesses. Confiding husbands, however, if they have no perception themselves, rarely lack an Iago to unseal their eyes ; and Belisarius was informed by Antonina's tire-woman of her flagitious courses, and the dishonour she had brought on his name. Two credible associates confirmed her disclosures, under a sworn promise of protection ; but the anger of the infatuated hero, which appeared to be uncontrollable, vanished before the ready tears of Antonina ; and to prove his belief in her innocence, he surrendered to her vengeance the three witnesses to her guilt. The tongues that had divulged such fatal secrets were then plucked from their roots ; and the yet warm bodies of the imprudent tattlers were cut into morsels, and scattered on the sea. Antonina, meanwhile, rendered bolder by impunity, no longer submitted to the least restraint ; and her attentions to Theodosius, a handsome barbarian, whom Belisarius had received into his house, were so undisguised, and so openly paraded, that they became the jest of the whole army. Photius, her son, maddened by such a disgrace, rushed into the presence of Belisarius, and with indignant tears demanded justice on his mother. He adduced incontestable evidence in support of his allegations ; and the jealousy of the doting husband was aroused, at last, by the culprit's son. But the conscience-stricken Theodosius had already become alarmed, and flying from the camp, found safety and concealment in an obscure monastery under the cowl of a monk ; Belisarius was again convinced and again deceived by the vehement protestations of his wife ; and the chivalrous Photius was

condemned for his indiscretion to the welcome seclusion of exile.

But in his own ruin, the son, though he might forgive the cruelty, could not forget the degradation of his mother, and he contrived to discover and seize Theodosius, who, after being recalled by Belisarius, and acquiring immense treasures through the influence of Antonina, had, in a moment of remorseful despondency, taken refuge with his spoil in the sanctuary of St. John. The faithless monk was now carried off to Cilicia, and immured in the dungeon of a sequestered castle ; but the active emissaries of the Empress Theodora, whose aid Antonina had invoked, soon traced out his prison, effected his liberation, and made a captive of Photius. While the latter was groaning in one of the gloomy cells, dug, like graves, beneath the palace of Theodora, his mother and her imperial protectress were revelling overhead, amidst all the accessories of Asiatic luxury ; and the ungrateful and impious Theodosius, who had forgotten both his obligations to his benefactor and his vows to Heaven, was treated with the honours awarded to a sovereign prince. But, in a moment, death snatched him for ever from the scene of his triumphs, leaving the bereaved Antonina inconsolable and desperate. Her sorrow and rage were wreaked on her innocent son, who was dragged from his dungeon, where light never entered, to be lashed by the scourge, or pitilessly stretched on the rack. Twice he found means to make his escape, and sought the fragile protection of a sanctuary ; but neither the privileges of the altar, nor the indignant outcries of the populace, drawn to the spot by the appearance of the military, could preserve an honourable citizen from the despotic power of the Empress and the hatred of an unnatural parent. Not till after a captivity of three years did Photius

finally escape, and making his way to Jerusalem, obtained repose, though not liberty, in the narrow cell of a monk.

The assistance and support which Antonina received from Theodora were purchased by services equally unscrupulous. To meet the wishes of her royal mistress, Antonina was willing to sacrifice every principle, or engage in any enterprise ; and during the occupation of Rome by Belisarius, she even went the length of deposing the Pope, who, by his adhesion to the tenets of the Council of Chalcedon, had incurred the fatal displeasure of Theodora. The pontiff had been detected corresponding with the Gothic army, then besieging the city ; and, summoned before the Roman general to answer the charge, the evidence of his messengers, and the more conclusive testimony of an intercepted letter, signed by his own hand, insured his conviction. His sentence, justified by the laws of war, was pronounced by the lips of Antonina, as she reclined on a luxurious couch ; and the venerable Sylverius was deprived of the keys of Heaven, muffled in the ghostly cowl of a friar, and smuggled off, a prisoner and exile, to a solitary monastery in the heart of Asia. An enormous bribe secured the vacant tiara for a more obsequious priest ; and the Empress gratefully divided the spoil with her dutiful Antonina.

During the Persian war, Belisarius was induced by a rumour of the death of Justinian to join in the movement of Buzes, which excited the highest resentment of Theodora ; and the hero was recalled to Constantinople with every mark of disgrace. But the enraged Empress, in the heat of her fury, shrank from taking his life, so often risked in the support and defence of her throne ; and she contented herself with despoiling him of his treasures, and leaving him a pensioner on the bounty of

his wife. "You cannot be ignorant," she observed, with a frown, as she informed him of his fate, "how much you have deserved my displeasure; but I am not insensible of the services of Antonina. To her merits and intercession I have granted your life. Let your gratitude be displayed where it is due, not in words, but in your future behaviour." After the death of Theodora, Antonina, in a fit of compunction or fear, retired to a monastery, on which she had expended the shattered remains of her fortune; and Belisarius is said to have had his eyes put out by Justinian, and to have wandered in rags through the streets of Constantinople, earnestly beseeching the passers-by to "Give a penny to Belisarius the General." But this story, though not too marvellous to be true, since it might find more than one parallel in the history of human vicissitudes, is doubted by Gibbon, and appears to rest on no credible testimony; whence we may conclude that Belisarius was not so unfortunate as Justinian was reputed ungrateful.

Intercourse with Eastern courts attracted to Rome and Constantinople droves of those human mules, whom Asiatic jealousy has selected, from the days of Semiramis, as the special guards of woman, and whose cloven feet were accustomed to preserve a footing on the slippery pavement of palaces. Infamy was the badge of all the tribe. Yet they soon occupied every approach to power and every avenue to the throne; their sinister influence was felt in every department of the government; and the noblest senators and proudest warriors, forgetting the dignity of birth and merit, were not ashamed to purchase their advancement from a rapacious chamberlain. Narses, reared in the stern honesty of the camp, was an exception to the rule, and, indeed, owed his physical degradation to accident. But the reproach of the class became

a stigma on the warrior, which all his glorious achievements were unable to efface. "Leave to men," was the message of the Empress Sophia, "the exercise of arms, and return to your proper station among the maidens of the palace, where a distaff shall again be placed in your hands." "I will spin her such a thread," replied the indignant chief, "as she shall not easily unravel." But a life worn by toil and a century of years was now near its close; and death rudely intercepted the just revenge of the hero, while his name was being acclaimed from the steps of the Capitol.

Too often, indeed, was the imperial throne overturned by successful soldiers, and the very foundations of society convulsed and subverted. The deposition and murder of the pious Maurice and his sons was followed by the imprisonment of his widow, the Empress Constantina, and her three youthful daughters, who, under a pretence of providing them an asylum, were confined in the cells of a secluded convent. But in this living grave, Constantina was haunted by an incessant terror of the assassin's poniard, and she took advantage of a dark night to escape to the sanctuary of St. Sophia, where she would doubtless have fallen a victim to the rage of the usurper Phocas, if the resolute attitude of the Patriarch had not averted the blow. A second attempt at flight afforded a specious pretext for taking her life; and after being subjected to the torments and the ignominy of the rack, the Empress and her three daughters were barbarously condemned to the block, and all perished on the same scaffold.

The death of the infamous Copronymus, son of Leo III., once more placed the imperial sceptre in the firm hand of a woman; for the feeble partnership of Leo IV. was scarcely recognised by his wife Irene. This "maid of

Athens" possessed no recommendation but her rare beauty, when, at the age of seventeen, she was selected by Copronymus as the spouse of Leo; but when the death of the Emperor raised her husband to power, her great capacity proved fully equal to the duties and difficulties of government. The premature death of Leo left her the uncontrolled exercise of authority, and the guardianship of an infant son; and now it was that the ambition of the Empress ignored the affection of the parent. In order to incapacitate her child for the functions of sovereignty, she deliberately neglected his education, and permitted him to grow up in idleness and ignorance, though, by her command, he was early initiated in the wicked mysteries of vice, and due care was taken that his boyish excesses should not be concealed from the people. Still, Constantine—for so he was named—became the hope of a faction, yearning to seize the uneasy helm of the state; and he was induced to sanction a design for the deposition of his mother, and his own elevation to supreme power. The intrigue, however, was seasonably discovered by Irene, who frustrated its operation, seized and severely punished the conspirators, and subjected the rebellious Emperor to the awful chastisement of the rod. An *émeute* of the Armenian guard ultimately accomplished his deliverance and his ruin. After banishing his mother, Constantine took sullen possession of the throne, but retained around him the treacherous eunuchs of Irene. A clandestine correspondence was opened with the fallen Empress; and her misguided son too late discovered his danger, and sought safety in an ignominious flight. He was arrested on the opposite shore of the Bosphorus, as he alighted from his galley, and quickly surrounded by the partisans of his mother, who, regardless of his commands, and his more

earnest and moving entreaties, dragged him back to Constantinople, and immured him in a lonely chamber, in the heart of the palace. It was in this very apartment that the unfortunate Constantine had first beheld the light; and here, in the gloom and silence of midnight, the cruel myrmidons of Irene stealthily approached his couch, plunged their daggers into his eyes, and doomed him to eternal darkness. Irene was again Empress; but her triumph was purchased by the violation of the tenderest claims of nature, as well as the first dictates of religion; and her restoration was proclaimed amidst the suppressed execrations of the populace. In that ignorant and credulous age, Heaven itself was supposed to mark its anger at her crime, by a total eclipse of the sun, which for seventeen days withheld its light from the affrighted world; and five years of wise and successful government failed to retrieve her reputation. Her rule was terminated by a cabal of eunuchs, and the mistress of the Roman world was, in her last years, compelled to earn a scanty subsistence by the labour of her hands.

The career of the Empress Theodora, consort of the stern and implacable Theophilus, was, in some respects, not dissimilar to that of Irene, though, under corresponding circumstances, her prudence or her virtues preserved her from similar guilt. Theophilus selected his Queen in a manner more beseeing a barbarous than a civilized monarch, but which, notwithstanding, had the advantage of affording a wide latitude of choice. Assembling all the most beautiful maidens in the empire, he ranged them in a double line in the principal saloon of his palace; and, attired in the imperial robes, with the purple mantle drooping from his shoulders, passed in state through the open ranks of the lovely company,

holding in his hand a golden apple, destined as the prize of the victress. Amidst such a throng, even an Emperor might feel embarrassed, and the bewildered Theophilus wavered between the beauty of Theodora and the dazzling charms of Icasia. "Woman," he observed, glancing at the latter, "has done much evil in the world." "And surely, sire," answered Icasia, "she has likewise been the instrument of much good." The monarch was offended at the retort, and gave the apple and his hand to the silent Theodora.

Theodora was left, like Irene, the guardian of her son, when he had only attained his fifth year, and she administered the government for a considerable period with consummate ability and judgment. Her care, however, could not preserve the heir of Theophilus from the corrupting vermin of the palace; and the young Emperor was an adept in sin, while he was yet a child in years. On reaching the age of eighteen, he aspired to govern alone; and after a faint resistance, Theodora abdicated the reins of power, and withdrew, in sullen majesty, from an ungrateful court. All restraint was now removed from the inhuman Michael, and, in his flagitious reign, he surpassed the vices, without displaying the graces of Nero, and was finally stabbed in his bed by Basil, his favourite chamberlain, whom he had raised from the royal stable to be his assassin and successor.

Constantine IX. was the last male descendant of Basil, and in his declining years he looked with apprehension to the future of his three daughters, whose maiden hands were, in so troublous a period, when the empire was threatened by the advancing host of the Saracens, ill adapted to sustain a reeling throne. In this dilemma they were invited to embrace the yoke and honourable protection of matrimony; but Eudocia, the eldest of the

sisters, had already devoted herself to a monastic life ; Theodora shrank from the hymeneal altar ; and only, Zoe, the youngest, at the prudent age of forty-eight, could be prevailed upon to accept the incumbrance of a husband. Her choice fell on a married man, Romanus Argyrus ; but he refused, when unexpectedly apprised of his election, to abandon a spouse whom he tenderly loved for the hand of a presumptive Empress ; and it was not till his wife abdicated her place, and buried herself in the cell of a convent, that a threat of putting out his eyes wrung from Romanus a reluctant compliance. The death of Constantine raised him to the throne, but the affections of the Empress were already transferred to his chamberlain, Michael, and the faithless Zoe presented with a smile a draught of poison to her husband. Michael, if he did not abet, connived at her treason, and while the corpse of Romanus was yet scarcely cold, he was solemnly united to the murderess, and admitted to share the degraded diadem. But remorse, the stern avenger, which enters the gates of palaces as easily as the open door of a hovel, haunted and distracted the guilty Michael ; and, surrounded by the ensigns of power, he could see nothing but the frowning spectre of Romanus. He sought to atone for his crime by fasts and vigils, and left his wife and miserable subjects to the domination of his brother John, one of the tribe of eunuchs, who, himself excluded from the succession, induced Zoe, in a fatal moment, to adopt as her heir his nephew Michael, the son of another brother, and, at length, to invest the unknown youth with the supreme authority. Michael's first act was to insult and imprison his benefactress, and he would probably have proceeded to take her life, if a popular tumult, provoked by his tyranny, had not rescued her from his hands, at the same time hurling

him from the throne, and punishing his ingratitude with the loss of his eyes. Sixty years had not cooled the ardour of Zoe, and at the entreaty of her subjects, she willingly espoused a third husband, and consented to share his affections with a previous claimant, who, while Zoe was saluted as Empress, received the inferior title of Augusta. On the death of her husband, Constantine X., who survived the unhappy Empress, the crown devolved on Theodora ; but her reign was merely nominal, and she not unwillingly resigned the cares of royalty for the gloomy repose of the grave. Her death paved the way, after a short interval, for the accession, by a military and popular revolt, of the august house of the Comneni.

The illustrious Anna Comnena, a scholar and an author, has bequeathed us, in her history of the reign of her father, the Emperor Alexius, a literary memorial of the virtues of her race. It is naturally coloured by the affectionate partiality of a daughter, and, perhaps, of a partisan ; for Anna was herself involved in the events she describes ; but, notwithstanding the opposing testimony of the Latin writers, we may safely conclude that the tribute she pays to the character of her parent was not wholly unmerited. That Alexius was prone to dissimulation, however, is proved by incontestable evidence, voluntarily though unthinkingly tendered, under circumstances which give it peculiar force. His consort Irene was desirous of securing the succession to Anna, instead of leaving it to the male line ; and in his last moments, she besieged his pillow with this unnatural request. The dying Emperor may be forgiven that, as his eyes were about to close for ever on the illusive grandeur of earthly power, he replied by an evasive observation on the vanity of human wishes, eliciting from Irene the severe retort—“ You die, as you have lived, a hypocrite !”

it though Alexius withheld his sanction from her designs, Anna, supported by the injudicious preference of Irene, did not tamely submit to the loss of the crown, and she was forming a powerful conspiracy against her brother, John the Handsome, when her design was discovered and betrayed by her timid husband. Her disappointment at the result was only equalled by her indignation against the traitor. "Nature," she bitterly said, "has made a mistake, and given me the soul of a man and that of a woman to Bryennius." The Emperor saved her life, which the voice of nature, if not of pity, would have demanded to destroy; but he seized her palace and treasures, and bestowed them on a favourite Turkish eunuch. The Turk, eclipsing the generosity of the Christian, respectfully declined the gift, and begged that the crown might be restored to the destitute princess. His request was granted, and Anna thus secured an honourable dignified retreat.

Anna witnessed the arrival in the East of the first invaders, whom Peter the Hermit, by his eloquence and fanaticism, summoned from every nook of Europe to follow under the banner of the Cross, and whom the effeminate citizens of Constantinople politely saluted with the epithet of barbarians. But these dubious allies of the empire opposed but a feeble check to the new and invincible power, which, rising in the deserts of Arabia, broke in headlong waves over the whole face of the East. Mahomet, or Mohammed, the originator of this mighty movement, exercised too great an influence on the destinies of the world, and especially of woman, not to find a place in our narrative; but from the necessity of compression, we can but glance at his character, and only reflect his strange and marvellous history. Mohammed was a native of the city of Mecca, in

Arabia, and a scion of the illustrious race of Hashem, of the tribe of Koreish. His father bore the name of Abdallah, and was so distinguished for his personal beauty, that his marriage with Amina, the mother of the Prophet, broke the gentle hearts of two hundred maidens, who simultaneously expired on the nuptial day. His son inherited the fatal gift, and at the age of twenty-five, made a conquest of his mistress, the rich and noble Cadijah, who bestowed her hand on her engaging domestic. Mohammed was now, by the ample fortune of his wife, restored to the rank and position of his ancestors, of which he had been deprived, on the premature death of his father while he was yet a child, by the unscrupulous frauds of his nearest kindred ; but, though raised to independence, he continued to devote himself to the pursuits of commerce, and it was not till his fortieth year that, abandoning this modest vocation, he formally announced himself as the messenger and prophet of God.

Brought up in the precincts, and almost under the roof of the Caaba, or temple of Mecca, which was intrusted to the guardianship of his family, the mind of Mohammed, naturally grave, had early been imbued with religious feeling, and inclined to religious contemplation. Travel, observation, and a free intercourse with foreigners, particularly with the Jews and various Christian sects of Syria, materially enlarged his ideas ; and as he advanced in age, he began to recoil from the grotesque or hideous idols enshrined in the Caaba, and to look for some purer object of adoration and worship. Every year, during the month of Ramadan, he flew from Mecca and the eyes of society, and for thirty days entombed himself in the gloomy cave of Hera, with no companion but his thoughts. Meditation is the mother of delusions, as well as the most genuine source of inspiration. In the cave

of Hera, Mohammed entered the darker cavern of his own mind ; he looked round with the torch of enthusiasm, and thought it was the lightning of God. His rapt imagination, fascinated by beatific visions—by the spell of one unchanging, overpowering idea, was raised to the seventh Heaven, brought before the Divine Throne, instructed to enlighten and reclaim mankind, and received a new but spurious Gospel in those delusive words—“ There is but one God, and Mohammed is His prophet.”

The first convert to the new faith was Cadijah, who, having already given Mohammed her heart, could not deny him her soul. Zeid, his slave, his cousin Ali, and the wealthy Abukeker, were the next acquisitions of the Prophet ; and three tedious years were devoted to the conversion of fourteen persons. Surrounded by this band, Mohammed, amidst the convivial fellowship of a banquet, divulged his mission to the principal sheiks of the race of Hashem. “ Who among you,” he then asked, “ will be my companion and vizier ? ” A profound silence seized the astonished assembly, till Ali, a youth of fourteen, impatiently exclaimed, “ I, O Prophet ! am the man ; and whosoever rises against you, I will dash out his teeth, tear out his eyes, break his legs, rip up his belly. O Prophet ! I will be thy vizier.” The sturdy youth was instantly named to the office, and fully did he redeem his savage promise.

But the doctrines of Mohammed, striking at the very heart of the ancient religion, made but little progress in Mecca, while they arrayed against him every votary of superstition, and every enemy of change. The accession of Abu Sophian to the government of Mecca gave strength and boldness to his enemies, and it was determined that a man from every tribe should be deputed to take his life, so as to preclude his family, when the tragic event

should become known, from demanding reparation for the murder. An angel—or a woman—warned Mohammed of his danger, and he owed his escape from death to a timely flight. But the assassins were soon on his track, and he was obliged to take refuge in the cave of Thor, a few miles from the city, where, in company with the faithful Abukeker, one of his earliest converts, he remained in momentary expectation of discovery. Once they heard the voices of their baffled pursuers at the mouth of the cavern. "We are only two," whispered Abukeker. "There is a third," answered Mohammed: "it is God." Their escape was indeed miraculous; and a spider's web across the opening of the cave, inducing a supposition that no one could have recently entered, preserved the seer from the daggers of his enemies. For three days they remained in this retreat, and a woman, the daughter of Abukeker, risked her life to convey them supplies of food. At length, under the friendly protection of night, Mohammed abandoned his covert, and with difficulty made his way to Medina—an incident commemorated by the Mohammedan era of the Hegira, or flight, the basis of Asiatic chronology.

Mohammed was received at Medina with shouts of triumph. Five hundred citizens, arrayed in their best attire, presented themselves as his escort; and the people saluted him as their sovereign, while they revered him as a Prophet. "If we are slain in your service," asked a band of sheiks, "what will be our reward?" "Paradise," was the prompt reply; and that promise, so liberally given, without condition or reservation, surrounded him with armed legions, and finally established his spiritual sway from the Indus to the Nile.

The Paradise of Mohammed was expressly adapted to the cravings of an Eastern imagination. On the wide

plains and in the arid deserts of Asia, even within the walls of its cities, water is the first necessary and luxury of life ; and the Mohammedan Heaven presents to the faithful a pleasant picture of crystal fountains, throwing up their waters in cool recesses, overshadowed by verdant trees. Here every dutiful son of the Prophet is surrounded by seventy-two wives, all graceful as fairies, and possessing, among other incomparable charms, black eyes of the most bewitching description. Women are not excluded from this tangible Elysium, but the joys they are to inherit, unlike those of men, are veiled by a wise silence.


Four wives are allotted by the Koran as the earthly portion of a believer ; but a special revelation from Heaven, which was never lacking in an emergency, gave an unlimited number to Mohammed ; and the capacious heart of the Prophet afforded ample room for eleven consorts. These mortal houris inhabited separate dwellings, clustered round the humble abode of Mohammed like grapes on a vine ; and lived, like himself, with the greatest simplicity, on dates, barley bread, and honey. It is singular that they were all widows, with the solitary exception of Ayesha, his favourite, who—so early does woman attain maturity under an Arabian sun—was but nine years old when she became his bride. Possessing the advantages of personal beauty and a persuasive tongue, in addition to his religious and military reputation, Mohammed rarely sued in vain ; yet Ilead, the daughter of Omeya, a young and beautiful widow, was, at first, opposed to his addresses. “Alas, Prophet of God !” she cried, “how can you expect happiness with me ? I am no longer young : I have a son ; and I am naturally prone to jealousy.” “As to your age,” replied Mohammed, “thou art much younger than I : as to thy

son, he will find in me a father : as to thy jealousy, I will pray to Allah to pluck it from thy heart." Such logic was irresistible, and the fair Ilead gave a blushing consent.

The later domestic career of Mohammed affords a striking contrast to that of his earlier life, when, for twenty-four years, he remained constant in his honourable attachment to Cadijah, admitting no other spouse to his house till she had ceased to exist. To the last, she retained a tender place in his memory, and his continual reference to her amiable qualities, as an example of female excellence, excited the ire, if not the jealousy, of the blooming Ayesha. "You forget she was aged!" observed the offended beauty : "God has now given you a better wife." "By Allah, no!" returned Mohammed, with noble emotion ; "a better there could not be! When I was poor, she made me rich ; and when I was mocked and derided, she believed in me."

Ayesha had no reason to complain of Mohammed's affection for the dead, since she might be well assured, from the marked preference he always showed for her, that she need fear no rival among the living. Her very follies invoked his tenderness, or claimed his protection ; and when her indiscreet conduct gave rise to a serious charge, for which there appears to have been but too good grounds, he resorted to his ordinary device of a divine revelation to clear her aspersed character. She maintained her ascendancy over him for the remainder of his days, and on her lap his head reclined at the sad hour of death.

After she became a widow, Ayesha, in her bitter enmity to Ali, the son-in-law of Mohammed, joined the malignant faction of Telha and Zobeir, who, on the assassination of Othman, the third successor of the Prophet in the Caliphate of the Faithful, unfurled the standard of



revolt. At the memorable battle of Bussora, which ended in the total destruction of the rebels, she was present in a litter in the midst of the fight ; but though the vehicle was completely riddled by javelins, and seventy men who successively held her camel were killed or disabled, she escaped unhurt. The victor treated her with lenity and indulgence, and she was conveyed from the field by a guard of women, attired as soldiers, who finally escorted her to the holy city of Medina, where, precluded from contracting a second marriage, she passed the remnant of her life as a mourner, at the sacred tomb of Mohammed.

Next to Ayesha, one of the most celebrated women of the Mohammedan *régime* was Zobeida, consort of the Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid, the contemporary and friend of Charlemagne. This lovely princess was endowed with all the attractions which fascinate and enchain the Asiatic mind. A complexion fair as morning was lit up by eyes black, soft, and lustrous ; and dark silk tresses waved, like the shadows of a summer night, from her pure and dazzling forehead. The gentle disposition of Zobeida, which no circumstance ever ruffled, gave additional force to her charms ; and before she raised the jealous gossamer of her veil, man's susceptible heart was vanquished by the sweetness of her voice. Her influence was always exercised in the cause of humanity, in the interest of the poor, the weak, and the innocent ; and many a romantic tale celebrates her beauty, and gratefully commends her clemency and tenderness. She reigned without a rival in the noble heart of Haroun ; and a stately edifice at Tabreez, rising to the height of eighty feet, and known by the appellation of Zobeida's Tower, remains to this day a memorial of the love she inspired in the Commander of the Faithful.

In the long struggle between the Crescent and the

Cross, the women of both sides, Christian and Moham-medan, often partook of the danger, as well as the enthusiasm of the contest ; and more than one fair heroine exposed herself to all the horrors of war. At the siege of Damascus, during the reign of the Emperor Heraclius, an expert Christian archer, named Thomas, the leader and hope of the city, committed great havoc among the Saracen chiefs, by the precision with which he winged his shafts from the ramparts ; and among the slain was Aban, a noble Arab, who had been accompanied in the expedition by his wife. Distracted by the spectacle of his lifeless body, she threw herself upon it, exclaiming, "Thou art gone to thy Lord, who first brought us together, and now has parted us ; but I will be thy avenger, and so seek to be with thee, because it is thee I love. Now I dedicate myself to the service of God." Hastily discharging the funeral obsequies, she armed herself with the weapons of the departed warrior, and plunged into the midst of the battle. An arrow from her bow struck down the standard-bearer of the Christians ; and a second, more deliberately aimed, hit the chivalrous Thomas, and deprived him of his right eye. But before his desperate assailant could complete her purpose, the hero was surrounded by his comrades, and borne in safety from the field.

Within the town, a young noble, named Jonas, was devotedly attached to the fair Eudocia, a lady of equal rank and incomparable beauty. Her parents, however, refused to sanction their nuptials in the presence of such dreadful public calamities ; and the impatient lover persuaded his mistress to fly with him from the city. As he proceeded in advance of her from the gate, under cover of a dark night, he fell into an ambush of the Saracens ; but his voice gave a timely warning to Eudocia, and by her

promptitude and courage she succeeded in making her way back to Damascus. Jonas, to save his life, abjured his religion, and meanly accepted the yoke of Mohammed. But his apostasy cost him his mistress; and on the capture of the city by the Saracens, Eudocia, who had taken refuge in a convent, spurned the enemy of her faith. By the terms of the capitulation, the Christians were allowed an interval of four days to proceed unmolested to the seacoast, where the Emperor had provided them an asylum. Jonas, scarcely restrained by the compact, waited impatiently till the term had expired; then he sprang on a fleet horse, and, at the head of a chosen band of Saracens, overtook and surrounded the fugitives. A dreadful scene of carnage ensued, in the midst of which Jonas sought and secured his mistress; but Eudocia, who had been deaf to his entreaties, now defied his violence, and, snatching up a dagger, terminated at once her sorrows and her life.

The army which the Arabian chief Caled, "the Sword of God," led into Syria, was accompanied by a phalanx of women, who performed all the duties of light cavalry, and formed a portion of the line of battle. They were composed of the tribe of Amyarites, descendants of the ancient Amalekites, and were trained from their youth in the familiar use of the lance and the bow. Their leader was the sister of Derar, and under her command they defeated a strong force of the enemy, and acquired a reputation which recalled the Amazons of old.

The African city of Tripoli was defended against the army of Abdallah by the prefect Gregory, whose daughter, a maiden endowed with every gift of female loveliness, animated by her courageous example the hopes of the besieged. It is a singular illustration of the character,

as well as the perils, of the age, that she had been reared in the practice of martial exercises, and the rough duties of a soldier. Nor was this training designed as a mere parade. On the first assault of the Saracens, she assumed her suit of mail, and accompanied the troops in a daring sortie. The enemy was repulsed ; and, to stimulate the valour of the Christians, the hand of the heroic maid, with one hundred thousand pieces of gold, was promised to the fortunate warrior who should produce Abdallah's head. The Saracen chief took refuge in his tent, where he was met by the reproaches of Zobier, one of the fiercest and most daring of the Arabian warriors. "Offer to your soldiers," cried Zobier, "the reward promised by the infidels. Let the head of Gregory be purchased by the hand of his daughter." The tempting guerdon was proclaimed, and a new spirit animated the fainting Saracens. They attacked with vigour a sortie of the Christians, led on by Gregory and his daughter. Gregory fell beneath the sword of Zobier ; and the bereaved heroine, seeking the consolation of death, became the captive of the victors. Zobier, however, could scarcely be persuaded to accept as a slave the illustrious and beautiful maiden, whose emotion deprived her of speech ; and he loudly declared that it was for another world, not for the transitory pleasures of the present, that he drew his scimitar and exposed his life in battle.

The Babylonian Caliphate was overthrown by Mahmid, Shah of Persia, aided by a tribe of Scythian origin, called the Turcomans, or Seljukian Turks. This new race of Mohammedans, after subduing and then losing the devastated provinces of Syria and Palestine, made their way into Greece ; and at the commencement of the fourteenth century, the celebrated Osman, from whom the Turks derive their popular appellation of Osmanlis, laid at Neapolis, on

the ruins of a Roman city, the slender and precarious foundations of the present Turkish empire.

The life of Ottoman women is still regulated by the Koran, which, with the collected precepts of Mohammed, precisely defines their position in society, or rather in the family of their husbands, their domestic relations, and their conjugal duties. These, however, are of the narrowest limits, particularly among the upper classes ; and a Turkish lady passes her days in smoking tobacco, listening to extravagant stories, applauding the agile movements of hired dancing-girls, or embroidering slippers. Her life is consumed by idleness, languor, and ennui ; her mind is harassed by the petty rivalries and miserable intrigues of a distracted household ; and she knows no world beyond the little sphere of the harem. Privacy she is never permitted, even if she could wish to seek the companionship of a vacant and weary mind ; and servants, or rather slaves, in an attitude of homage, continually watch her looks, while she sits cross-legged on a sumptuous couch, the drapery of her flowing robe studiously and gracefully arranged, so as to suffer only her tiny feet to be seen.

The childhood of Turkish females is not subject to the harsh restrictions of later years, and young girls, wearing no veil but their own innocence, attend the same schools as boys, and have the range of their parental home, without being confined to the limits of the harem. In some respects, the result almost justifies their subsequent seclusion, as neither in mind nor manners are they improved by an intercourse which, by law and custom, their mothers are prevented from sharing, and, consequently, cannot overlook. At the most impressionable age, they insensibly acquire a coarseness and levity which they are never able entirely to discard ; and the careless training of the

child is but too apparent in the free demeanour of the mother.

Turkey scrupulously withholds from woman the rank, though not the dazzling splendours of royalty. The mother of the reigning Sultan, indeed, enjoys the proud title of Sultana, but the ladies of the palace are merely styled Kaduna, and are not admitted to the dignity of marriage. Abdul Mesjid, the present sovereign of Turkey, has confided his domestic happiness to five Kaduna, who reside in the stately chambers of the Seraglio, and are sedulously attended by two thousand female slaves, the ministers of their will, their pleasures, and their caprice.

The broad plateaux of the Caucasus, which first afforded a home to the human race, are still the cradle and nursery of the mothers of Turkey. In the lap of those stupendous mountains, the Alps of the East, in the glens of Circassia and the smiling valleys of Georgia, Ottoman gold has found a market of beauty, where it may purchase its rarest specimens. My intrepid friend Captain Spencer, one of the few Europeans who has penetrated into the Caucasian fastnesses, declares that "the beauty of feature and symmetry of form for which the Circassian race are so celebrated, have not been exaggerated. The pure mountain air gives a freshness to their complexion not to be expected in such a latitude. That of the women is delicately clear; and as they estimate at its full value the charms of a pretty person, they leave no means untried to improve their beauty."

The Circassians exhibit many of the usages common to other Eastern nations, in respect to their treatment of women; young girls, as in Turkey, are under no restraint as to their associates, till they attain a certain age, generally nine or ten; but from that time they live exclusively with their own sex, and never appear among men without

the protection of a veil. At their marriage, the bridegroom, or his parents, if he is still in dependence on them, present the father of the bride with a dower, varying in value with the social rank of the lady, or his own means and position. But the most beautiful Circassian women are bought up by Jews and Armenians, for the purpose of supplying the harems of Turkey, Egypt, and Persia, and, in fact, form the staple export of the country.

Such are the women of the dominant race in the once potent, but never free Byzantine territory. For four centuries the Mohammedan power, now appearing on one side, now on another, hung, like a dark thunder-cloud, over the shattered fabric of the empire, which retained the name, without the vitality of a nation. On the morning of the 29th May, 1453, the long-impending storm burst forth with irresistible might ; and the imperial city of Constantinople, with its churches, its gorgeous palaces, and its miserable inhabitants, fell, after a feeble resistance, into the hands of the Moslems. A crowd of helpless women fled for refuge to the cathedral of St. Sophia, as if a Christian temple, however venerable, could protect them from the violence and the cruelty of the Mussulman. Too soon they were undeceived. The inexorable Sultan Mohammed rode on horseback into the cathedral, followed by a legion of ruffians : he galloped through the terrified suppliants to the steps of the altar ; and there, amidst breathless silence, proclaimed the new and ascendant faith—"There is but one God, and Mohammed is his Prophet."

It was the watchword of destruction, and a terrible shriek announced that the fearful work had begun.

XII.

BARBAROUS NATIONS.

THE condition of woman has always been the most degraded the nearer we approach to a state of nature, or, rather, the less we are raised above the level and mere animal characteristics of the brute creation. Among savage nations, she is still a hewer of wood and drawer of water, providing by her labour for the daily sustenance and support of her family ; while man, abdicating his natural duties, lives in shameful indolence and ease. This inversion of nature has, as a matter of course, distorted and perverted her disposition : her heart has been literally unstrung, and, like a broken musical instrument, has completely lost its harmony. It is true that, in some cases, the beautiful lineaments of the female character have remained apparent in the lowest depths of human debasement ; but the general effect of savage life is to steel her tender feelings, to pluck up her sympathies, to deaden her affections, and to destroy her modesty. She becomes a curse to man instead of a blessing, for in this abject, irredeemable servitude she serves but to develop, foster, and sustain his worst propensities.

We are warranted in concluding, from their extraordinary length of days, the incredible hardships they endured, and the wonderful duration of their beauty, that women in primeval times were endowed with physical powers surpassing very far those of modern experience ; and it was to be expected that, under such circumstances, they should make an attempt to throw off the yoke which man had imposed upon them. Probably some incident

of this kind gave rise to the community of Amazons, or Amazonides, who for many ages preserved their independence as a female nation. Their very name was significant of their desperate character, being derived from their inhuman custom of burning out the right breast, that they might, on reaching maturity, hurl a javelin with more force, and use more freedom in drawing the bow. They are alluded to by Priam, whom they assisted against the Greeks, although, as we learn from his own lips, he had previously been numbered among their enemies—

“ In Phrygia once were gallant armies known,
In ancient time, when Otaus filled the throne,
When godlike Mygdon led their troops of horse,
And I, to join them, raised the Trojan force :
Against the manlike Amazons we stood,
And Sangar's stream ran purple with their blood.”

The fierce resolution, daring, and unconquerable intrepidity of the Amazons, were a proverb among the ancients, and they were held in dread by the greatest heroes and most powerful nations. Their partial subjugation formed the ninth labour of Hercules, and was afterwards assigned to Bellerophon, as a sure means of effecting his destruction. As the basis of their union, all association with men was strictly prohibited, except during a few days in the year, when, throwing aside their warlike character, they visited the surrounding kingdoms, and were permitted, by special treaties, to depart unmolested. According to Justin, they barbarously strangled their sons as soon as they came into the world, but Diodorus affirms that they merely distorted their limbs, and others assert, with more probability, that they offered the despised infants no violence, but handed them over to their fathers. The fortunate daughter of an Amazon

was reserved for a higher and more ambitious destiny. From her infancy she was inured to every kind of hardship, and after submitting to the cruel initial rite, was carefully trained in the use of the bow and spear, the javelin and deadly sling, as soon as she could move her arms. At an early age she took the field, and encountered in mortal combat the most formidable legions of antiquity.

The Amazons were originally seated in Cappadocia, on the rugged banks of the Thermodon ; but, as their numbers increased, they extended their narrow territory, by successive acquisitions, as far as the Caspian Sea, and, at one time, actually contended for the empire of Asia. Of their cities, Smyrna still remains to attest their ancient puissance, and they were also the founders of Ephesus, Magnesia, Thyatira, and Themscyra. The last was the capital of their dominions ; and long retained its original importance ; but the Amazons, as a nation, probably never recovered from their signal defeat by the Greeks, so emphatically referred to by Priam. Herodotus mentions that the victors, after dividing the spoil, filled three large ships with captive Amazons, and put to sea, when the indomitable heroines suddenly fell upon them, and cut them in pieces. The wind and waves carried the doomed ships to Cremni, in Scythia, where the liberated band, resuming their bows and javelins, which they found on board, boldly landed. They were instantly attacked by the Scythians, and a sanguinary battle ensued, which, however, led, in the end, to a more friendly meeting, and ultimately the Amazons consented to accept a party of Scythian youths as their husbands. But it was stipulated on their part, as the first condition of this compact, that the bridegrooms were to abandon their country, and seek some new unoccupied territory, where their wives would

be at liberty to follow their own customs, without being fettered by those of Scythia ; and accordingly the whole company resolutely crossed the Tanaia, and founded, on the borders of Lake Mæotis, the powerful tribe of the Sauromatæ. The marriage laws of this race, one of the most barbarous of the Scythian hordes, preserved a tradition of their Amazonian origin, and no maiden was permitted to marry till she had killed an enemy ; “ in consequence of which,” says the grave historian, “ some of them die of old age without being married, as they are not able to satisfy the law.”

A large body of the Amazons, when they could no longer maintain their independence in Asia, emigrated to Africa, and there established a new kingdom, which soon acquired considerable importance. Some of the ancients indeed—and among them Strabo—doubt whether the Amazons ever existed, and consider their entire history to be fabulous, but it is too well attested to be thus disposed of, and is not so inconsistent with reason as to warrant rejection. Strabo himself mentions a community of women of very similar character. He tells us that in the ocean, at no great distance from the iron coast of Gaul, there is a small island, inhabited exclusively by women, who, neglecting the other gods, devote themselves particularly to the worship of Bacchus, adoring him with numerous mystic rites and sacrifices. They only associate with men at certain festivals, when they cross to the mainland ; but no man, on any pretence whatever, is ever permitted to visit the island. Among other barbarous usages, these untamable women had a custom, once a year, of removing the roof from the venerated temple of their idol, each bringing to the spot a pack of fresh materials to form a new one ; and whoever suffered her burden to fall, as she approached the edifice, was

solemnly apportioned as a sacrifice, and torn in pieces by the others. "It invariably happens," adds Strabo, "that one drops her pack, and so becomes a victim."

The warlike exploits of the Amyarite women have already been described (see p. 241, *ante*); and equal the ancient achievements of the Amazons, with whom, indeed, they have been compared.

But the hasty objections of the incredulous may be met by the fact, not so easily disputed, that Amazons exist to this day in the benighted regions of Africa; and the army of the too notorious King of Dahomey includes a large corps of these martial viragos. Not more than a year ago, they fought a pitched battle with the men of a neighbouring nation, and the conflict was witnessed, with equal terror and horror, by two English missionaries, who watched its progress from an adjacent eminence. The Amazons were ultimately compelled to retire, but not till they had severely suffered, and inflicted nearly equal injury on their sturdier adversaries.

Various barbarous nations of antiquity availed themselves of the services of women in war, and Herodotus mentions, among other examples, the Zaveces, who employed their wives and daughters to drive their war-chariots; thus placing them in the very front of battle. The Machlyes and the Auses, two Libyan tribes, living on the shores of Lake Tritonis, carefully trained their women to the use of arms; and once a year, on the festival of their patron goddess Minerva, the virgins of each nation, forming themselves into two hostile companies, attacked each other before the temple with stones and clubs, contending for the mastery with desperate resolution. At the close of the fight, the most beautiful of the survivors was presented with a sword and a sumptuous suit of armour; and then, amidst the accla-

mations of both sexes, installed in a chariot, and conducted in triumph round the lake.

The Libyan women generally, as might be expected from this brutalizing custom, were in a very low condition, both in a social and moral respect. They paid little attention to their persons, and their dress of leather, mantled with dyed goatskin, was, in that warm climate, not the most conducive to cleanliness ; hence their bodies were covered with vermin, which, we learn from Herodotus, they were in the habit of biting in two, and then throwing away. Their hair was suffered to grow to a great length, falling in dishevelled tresses over their shoulders below the waist, and they wore no ornament, either as maidens or matrons, except a brass chain fastened round each leg, and perhaps designed as a badge of servitude. They became wives at a very early age ; but no man was permitted to marry till the King had had the refusal of his bride.

Next to the Libyans, the Thracians were among the most barbarous of the nations of antiquity ; and the women of this race, subjected to the same abject thralldom, were proportionately depraved. One custom of the Crestonæan horde is worth recording. On the death of a Crestonæan, his wives assembled with his friends in the family tent, or hut, and warmly disputed as to who had been his favourite, each adducing evidence in support of her own pretensions. The fortunate victor in the contest was carried to the tomb of her husband, and there, in presence of the others, strangled by her nearest relative, and buried with the dead man ; on which the surviving wives, envying her felicity, burst into loud lamentations at their unhappy fate in being obliged to outlive this public disgrace.

A practice somewhat similar prevailed among the

Scythians, though, in their case, it was followed only at the funeral of a king. The corpse of the monarch, after being carefully embalmed, and encased in a coat of wax, was laid in a large pit on a bed of leaves, and covered over with mats; and his favourite wife, brought to the spot in a sumptuous chariot, was then publicly strangled, and deposited by his side. At the same time, his cook, page, groom, and courier, with four fleet horses, and a number of other animals, were also slaughtered, so that they might accompany the deceased pair on their mysterious journey; and gold goblets were provided for the accommodation of the party, that they might want for nothing on the road.

Except at the funeral of a king, the Scythians rarely put a woman to death; and though it was customary, in administering the laws, to punish the family of a criminal as well as himself, his wives and daughters were invariably spared; and even their personal offences were visited with comparatively light penalties. By their husbands, however, they were very barbarously used, and condemned to the most degrading bondage.

In one of their marauding expeditions to Media, the Scythians were so long absent from home, that their wives, supposing they had been killed in battle, or were detained in captivity, formed a matrimonial alliance with their slaves; and on the return of the rightful lords, all parties were, to their mutual dismay, involved in a very disagreeable embroilment. The slaves, however, were determined not to resign either their consorts or their liberty, and a fierce battle ensued, in which both sides experienced great losses, though neither could claim the victory. In this dilemma a Scythian chief proposed that each man should single out his own slaves, and, laying aside his bow and javelin, ride at them with a horsewhip,

when, from force of habit, they would probably take to flight, and naturally fall into their old subjection. The manœuvre, which was instantly put in practice, succeeded admirably, and, by this bold measure, the Scythians recovered at once both their wives and their slaves.

The Scythians derived many of their social usages from the Hyperboreans, a still more northerly nation, of very remote antiquity, being mentioned incidentally both by Hesiod and Homer. Women were admitted by the Hyperboreans to the highest offices of religion, which, though a practice common among the Greeks, was a rare occurrence among barbarians, particularly in the north. The Britons, indeed, included women in the Druidical order; and the Satræ, a Thracian horde, who long preserved their independence, intrusted the oracle of Bacchus to the exclusive care of a priestess. But these instances were notable exceptions to the rule, and in most cases, the religious functions were wholly appropriated by men.

The peculiar religious institutions of the Hyperboreans were established in honour of two virgins, Hyperoche and Laodice, or, as some say, Arge and Opia, who proceeded as missionaries into the neighbouring countries, and met their death at Delos. Their memory was perpetuated in the marriage ceremony of the Hyperboreans, and no union was complete till the bride, arrayed in nuptial attire, laid one of her flowing tresses, wound round a distaff, on the tomb of the two virgins, in the temple of Diana, where the bridegroom also deposited a votive lock, twined round a plant, and the marriage was thus announced to their kindred and friends.

Among the barbarous nations of Western Europe, the sex held a position little, if at all, in advance of that which it filled in the North and the East. Strabo has preserved some particulars respecting the women of Iberia,

which give a melancholy picture of their condition. Their degradation, indeed, seems to have resulted, not so much from absolute ill-treatment, as from the ancient usages of the country, which awarded to woman the province of toil, and that of war to man. It is true, they were assigned also a part in the public festivals, and, like the Spanish damsels of the present day, joined in the dance hand in hand with men. But the yoke of servitude imposed upon them, even at a time when every sentiment of nature pleaded for commiseration, was never relaxed, and it was a common occurrence for children to be born while their mothers were actually working in the field. Such habits naturally destroyed the sensibility, as well as hardened and defaced the character, and the Iberian women were but too strongly imbrued with the fierce spirit of their mates. Strabo relates, that, in the war against the Cantabrians, mothers deliberately murdered their children rather than suffer them to be captured; and on one occasion, an Iberian woman slew a number of her fellow-captives as the only means of terminating their slavery. But with all their ferocity, they possessed one weakness common to the sex in every country: they were extremely fond of dress. Looking back some twenty centuries, we may trace the rudiment of the Spanish mantilla in the head-gear of the Iberian belle, which, secured to a fillet of iron, encircling the head, fell in folds over one side of her face and her shoulders, or could be made to veil the whole countenance, at the will of the wearer. The jet locks were worn long, though ladies of more refined taste, not satisfied with the arrangements of nature, shaved the centre of the head, so as to acquire prematurely that glossy baldness, which it is now the generous aim of Macassar to prevent. Their garments, still resembling the present fashion of Spain,

were uniformly black, but were profusely, if not tastefully embroidered—a proof that the hard, rugged toil of husbandry had not impaired their dexterity with the needle. Nor did it in any way affect the natural grace of their movements, which, with the glances of their dark eyes, secured them considerable influence with the sterner sex; and, by an ingenious fiction, they were even allowed the privilege of inheriting property. On their marriage, however, it was, of course, always appropriated by their husbands.

The Goths, scarcely more civilized than the swarthy Iberians, treated women in much the same manner, and, in great exigencies, were often strongly influenced by their counsel and example. In their military expeditions, they were invariably accompanied by their wives and daughters, who travelled with the provisions and baggage, in numberless waggons, forming a sort of commissariat to the barbaric host, and after a battle, they removed and tended the wounded with the zeal and pious care of Sisters of Charity. At times, they even presented themselves on the field, and incited their husbands to renewed feats of valour and daring. In the most critical moment of the battle of Verona, when the Goths were seeking safety in flight, the beautiful and gifted Amalasuntha, whose charms and learning would have graced the most polished court, arrested Theodoric in his retreat, and peremptorily commanded him to return to the combat. The hero obeyed, and achieved a glorious victory. On the capture of Ravenna by Belisarius, the Gothic matrons spit in the faces of their dejected husbands, in contemptuous derision of their supineness and pusillanimity. The women were also uniformly admitted to a share in the spoil; and they rarely failed to secure the richest portion. A bride

always received from her husband, on the morning succeeding her nuptials, a special wedding-gift, corresponding in value with his station and means ; and this exclusive property could only be alienated by her own act. At the marriage of Placidia with Adolphus, the royal bride was attended by fifty beautiful youths, who presented her, in the name of her Gothic husband, the conqueror of Italy, with a hundred basins of gold, filled alternately with pieces of the precious metal and the most priceless gems. Among the other treasures acquired by the bride on this occasion, was, in all probability, the celebrated table called the table of Solomon, composed, it is said, of one immense emerald, set in three rows of pearls, and resting on three hundred and sixty-five bars of solid gold, profusely studded with gems.

Women were treated with less consideration by the Britons, owing, no doubt, to their sanction of polygamy, which they are said to have carried to such an extent, that it was no uncommon thing to find a Briton's mud hovel promiscuously tenanted by ten wives and fifty children. Still these untutored savages, living almost in a state of nature, invested the weaker creation with some touches of sentiment ; and the sad story of Boadicea's wrongs enlisted the whole nation in her cause. The injured Queen herself, with her two daughters, the innocent cause of her misfortunes, personally led the British host to battle. She had previously harangued the army from her simple throne—a pile of green turf, collected and raised by the hands of her subjects ; and on this she sat, a queen indeed, although her brightest ornament was her own golden tresses, falling in rich luxuriance to her waist. Martia, another British queen, is said to have originated the practice of trial by jury, afterwards perfected by the great Alfred, and still regarded as the pal-

ladium of our national liberties. The fair Queen Gweniver will ever be associated with the immortal fame of Arthur, and with his Knights of the Round Table ; though poetry and romance, perhaps without just cause, have done their best to asperse her name and blacken her reputation.

During the latter years of the Roman sway in Britain, a large portion of the aboriginal population emigrated to Gaul, and there founded the little state of Bretagne. The usurper Maximus carried across the channel an immense host ; and it was on this occasion that St. Ursula, with eleven thousand noble and sixty thousand plebeian virgins, the destined brides of the adventurous emigrants, committed themselves to the treacherous custody of the waves. The fleet containing the lovely Argonauts was, however, driven by adverse winds on the rocky coast of Germany, and the whole company fell into the hands of the Huns, by whom they were barbarously massacred.

Women were at all times treated with great cruelty by the savage and perfidious Huns. As an Asiatic people, they looked on polygamy as a natural institution, and their wives and daughters as merely a portion of their chattels. The latter themselves, indeed, had been brought to entertain a similar opinion ; and this was strikingly manifested by Bleda, the widowed sister-in-law of Attila, in her reception of the Roman ambassadors, on the occasion of their proceeding to negotiate a peace with the victorious chief. They also retained the Eastern custom of visiting the sins of the husband on his innocent wife ; and the spouse of a Roxolan chief, who had deserted to the enemy, was condemned by the ruthless Hermanric to be torn asunder by wild asses—a common punishment among this fierce people.

It was customary for the women of the royal village to go in procession to meet Attila, on his return from a

military expedition. The way was marshalled by a chosen band of maidens, walking under a sumptuous canopy, and who, as they came up, received the warrior king with hymns of triumph ; then, wheeling round, preceded him to the palace, surrounded by all the other women of the village, ranged in regular lines, and occasionally joining in the national pæan.

Other savage nations emulated, and perhaps surpassed, the example of the Huns in their inhuman oppression of the sex. Female captives were impaled alive by the Slavonians, or stretched between four posts, and beaten to death with clubs. Women were sacrificed to the heathen gods by the Franks, in the camp of the Christian King Clovis. The frightful excesses of the depraved Lombards cannot be related by the pen of the historian ; and one diabolical horde, insatiable of blood and rapine, left the mangled bodies of young girls to be devoured by vultures, while another chopped their quivering limbs in atoms, and scattered them to the winds.

The condition of women in the rear of the furious hordes who swept at various times over the Roman world, it is beyond not only the powers of description, but the capacity of imagination, to realize. Bereft of everything that can render the world and life of value, they were left in territories turned into deserts, and were often reduced, in their utter destitution, to the horrible necessity of feeding on human flesh. Acorns were esteemed a delicacy in countries once teeming with every product and gift of nature ; and Procopius relates, that two wretched women, who had discovered an obscure and solitary lair, successively surprised and murdered seventeen travellers, who found a grave in their emaciated bodies. The same author computes the numbers who perished from the various barbarian inroads, during the single

reign of Justinian, at no less than six millions ; and of these the greater portion were women.

The ancient Germans were proudly distinguished for the consideration and tender indulgence which they evinced for women, particularly for those of their own nation. Tacitus has preserved, in his piquant and epigrammatic pages, some vivid glimpses of their domestic life, which are equally creditable to both sexes. The cave or hut of the Teutonic warrior was the home of virtue, innocence, and truth. His wife and daughter, his companions in peace, were his solace in war, attending him in his most hazardous enterprises, and eagerly sharing the toil of the march, the severe hardships of the camp, and the dangers of the field. In times of peril, the Germans ever looked to their wives for counsel, encouragement, and support ; and the wise women of the nation, solemnly set apart from the others, and invested with the title of *Helleda*, were regarded with profound reverence, endowed with peculiar privileges, and universally recognised as the interpreters of fate.

XIII.

THE DARK AND MIDDLE AGES.

BETWEEN the intellectual light of modern times and the civilization of ancient Rome, the dark ages, as they are emphatically called, stand like a blank, or rather an eclipse, which awakens a mingled feeling of wonder and awe. Not only were the arts and sciences dormant, or wholly lost, but all the incidents of the era partook of its profound gloom, and were like deeds done in the night. If the horizon was for a moment illumined, it was by

lightning breaking from the thunder-cloud, by the flash of a meteor, which expired as it appeared, serving, indeed, only to render darkness visible. Learning was dead, and religion itself was shrouded and disguised in an unknown tongue.

The see of Rome, which had laid its foundations on the ruins of the empire, gradually arrogated to itself the supreme direction of temporal as well as spiritual affairs, and claimed for its bishop the potent attributes of a sovereign pontiff. Not only distant churches, but cathedrals and rich abbeys, monasteries, and convents, peopled by idle crowds of monks and nuns, given up to bigoted devotion, or to still less excusable practices, here following an ascetic, there a too indulgent course of life, all admitted its supremacy, and acknowledged the reigning bishop as the vicegerent of the Redeemer. Popes announced themselves as umpires and arbitrators between kings; prelates dictated terms to princes; and the successors of the humble fishermen of Galilee, who were forbidden to have two coats, or to furnish themselves with either purse or scrip, were surrounded by all the accessories of Asiatic pomp. This, however, was not the worst effect of the system. Its principal, earnest, and unremitted aim was to render every power subordinate to the priests, who, in their turn, were the submissive creatures of the Pope; and hence it enslaved the conscience, and consequently the intellect, of mankind, overwhelming the whole world in a deluge of barbarism.

The first Christian king was Clovis, son of Childeric, by Basina, Queen of the Thuringians, who with a levity characteristic of the age, eloped from her husband to become the companion of Childeric, candidly avowing that she would have equally preferred any bold warrior who excelled the Salic chief in personal beauty and bravery. Clovis was but fifteen years of age when the

sudden death of his father, in the flower of life, raised him to the command of his native tribe ; and though it then numbered only five thousand warriors, he ultimately succeeded by his conquests in establishing the great monarchy of France. He was converted to the Christian faith by his wife, the beautiful and devout Clotilda, Princess of Burgundy, who exercised a marked and salutary influence over his mind ; and so much was he affected by her recital of the sufferings of the Redeemer, that he was unable to restrain his indignation at the conduct of His cruel persecutors, and, referring to the awful scene of the crucifixion, furiously exclaimed, " If I had been there, with my valorous Franks, He should have been amply avenged." This zealous Catholic perpetrated without remorse the most heinous crimes, and was steeped in the innocent blood of his allies and kindred ; but the Church, intent on its own aggrandizement, shut its eyes on the sins of its potent son, and Clovis readily purchased impunity or absolution by the timely endowment of a convent, or a propitiatory gift to his patron Saint Martin, to whom he had erected a shrine in the city of Tours, though he repeatedly declared, in his less pious moments, that he was rather a costly friend.

Under the Merovingian dynasty, which Clovis founded and consolidated, arose the first development of the feudal system, so long the prevailing government of Europe, and not yet entirely eradicated from its institutions. The father of the French monarchy parcelled out his newly-acquired dominions among his adherents and followers, who held their fiefs on a military tenure, binding them to repair to his assistance in time of war, and follow his standard to the field of battle. The same system extended to the tenants and dependents of these seigneurs, who, on their own domains, exercised a sort of petty sovereignty,

too often of the most tyrannical character ; and every one was bound, in his degree, to render feudal service to his immediate superior, either personally or by proxy. Such a state of society necessarily led to great insecurity, both of person and property ; and the villas and farms of the Merovingian nobles were gradually superseded by castles, garrisoned by their serfs or by bands of trained soldiers. Military discipline, growing more and more stringent, soon introduced distinctions of rank, and hence arose the various steps of page, henchman, esquire, and knight, with the subordinate and less honourable grades, so frequently mentioned in the annals of chivalry.

Those annals are little more than a dark unvarying catalogue of crimes. Society, shattered by the political earthquake which had destroyed the supremacy of Rome, was for ages completely disorganized ; murder had become not only a familiar, but a domestic incident, common in every household, and branded on every hearth ; the most endearing ties of nature were openly violated, repudiated, and contemned ; an oath of amity was a sure pledge of assassination, and religion, when it cowed the face of a monk or noble, was a license for undisguised and unheard-of wickedness. It was, indeed, a dark period of history, when men were without honour and women without virtue.

Hardly could we expect that the gentler sex would be uninfluenced by the temper of the times, even under circumstances of a favourable character ; but, in fact, their training, from their earliest youth, was eminently adapted to cramp and deform their minds. Among the humbler classes, the system of vassalage produced the most pernicious consequences, leading to a total obliteration of moral sentiments, deepened and confirmed by the general social insecurity, which invariably left the weak and helpless at the mercy of the strong. The power of life and

death, with a jurisdiction over woman at which humanity shudders, was comprised by the rights of seignory ; and when the daughter of a noble repaired to the castle of the bridegroom, in another province, or perhaps a distant country, she was accompanied by a number of the maiden thralls of her father, torn from their homes and kindred, and bound by chains to her litter, as a wedding-gift to the bride. Damsels of the highest rank were separated, in their tenderest years, from their natural guardians, and were reared in the seclusion and superstition, perhaps amidst the secret irregularities, of a convent, till they reached the age of marriage, when, if they escaped the seductions of the consecrated veil, they were placed as attendants in the boudoir of some noble dame, more distinguished for her past gaieties than her present good odour. Here they completed their education, by learning etiquette, which, with the art of embroidery, a knowledge of the finer branches of needlework, the legends of the saints, and their Latin prayers, with the meaning of which they were wholly unacquainted, formed the sum of their attainments. True, a few of the English princesses, while immured in the famous Abbey of Romsey, in Hampshire, were taught to read their Missals ; but this was a rare accomplishment, and writing was a science which neither dame nor noble ventured to study. More attractive and more congenial pursuits were presented by the chase and the falconry, the chess-board, and the dice-box ; and learning and the polite arts, which so adorn, refine, and elevate the mind, were prohibited equally by fashion and by religion.

We have seen, in the case of Clovis, that the crime of murder affixed itself to the highest rank and the most brilliant characters ; and even the pious Clotilda does not escape its malignant taint. Enraged at the assassination of her father, who fell beneath the dagger of his brother,

she urged her sons, when they had succeeded to the iron sceptre of Clovis, to invade the dominions of Sigismund, the innocent heir of the fratricide ; and, falling into the hands of the French princes, Sigismund, with his wife and two children, was entombed alive in a well. He was himself not free from the stain of blood, and this saint of the Roman calendar, who has received the honours of canonization, had, at the instigation of a cruel step-mother, taken the life of his own son. Bitterly repenting the act, he threw himself on the bleeding corpse, and loudly bewailed the unhappy youth. "It is not his situation, O King !" exclaimed one of his courtiers—"it is thine which deserves pity and lamentation."

Alboin, King of the Lombards, usurped the throne of Conimund, put the fallen monarch to death, and, though previously contracted to the granddaughter of Clovis, forcibly espoused his only child, a princess so distinguished for her beauty that, like another ill-fated woman, she had received the proud name of Rosamond. This monster gave his nobles a sumptuous banquet, at which he drank the rich wine of Rhætia from the skull of Conimund, converted into a goblet, and then, re-filling it to the brim, despatched it by a messenger to the Queen, commanding her to make merry with her father. "Let the will of my lord be obeyed," answered the outraged Rosamond, and drained the skull of its contents. But her inveterate hatred, the result of a long course of ill-usage, now secretly threw off all restraint ; and she stooped to the last indignity to obtain a bloody revenge. By this means she secured the services of an intrepid warrior, named Peredeus, who, with her ordinary lover, Helmichis, the King's armour-bearer, fell on Alboin in his chamber, while the Lombard Delilah, who had lulled him to sleep by her caresses, kept watch at the door. The

monarch started up, and endeavoured to defend himself with a stool, but was quickly overpowered, and, after a vain effort to throw off his assailants, received a mortal wound, the smart of which was aggravated by the cruel derision of his wife, who, insensible to every instinct of her sex, smiled as he expired. But the wicked Queen, though successful for a moment, was soon compelled to seek safety in flight, and with her two lovers, obtained a shameful refuge in the fortress of Ravenna. Here she found a new suitor in Longinus, the chief minister of the empire ; but it became necessary, before she could give him her hand, to emancipate herself from the jealous attentions of Helmichis, whose vigilance rendered him both troublesome and dangerous. A cup of poison offered the readiest mode of accomplishing this object ; but Helmichis, himself an assassin, had no sooner partaken of the draught than he suspected its character, and, drawing his sword, obliged Rosamond to swallow the remainder. Thus the infamous couple perished together, in a manner not uncommon in that guilty age.

The iron crown of Lombardy, which Rosamond's flight left vacant, was ultimately seized by Charlemagne, or Charles the Great, who, on the death of Pepin, succeeded with his brother Carloman to the extensive empire of the Franks. This greatest of the Carlovingian monarchs espoused a daughter of the chivalrous Lombard King Desiderio, with the foregone intention, whenever an opportunity should present itself, of forcibly appropriating the dominions of his father-in-law. The death of his brother Carloman, whom he had incessantly harassed by his arms, at length afforded the desired occasion, as on his invading the territories of the deceased king, the terrified widow fled with her children to the court of Desiderio, who generously gave them an asylum. They

were soon joined by the wife of Charlemagne, whom he had insultingly divorced, and the fierce King himself, at the head of a mighty army, then descended like an avalanche from the Alps, sweeping everything before him. Desiderio was taken prisoner, and, with the Lombard monarch, his miserable daughter and the widow of Carloman, with her infant sons, fell into the hands of the conqueror. History is silent as to the fate of the elder captives, but the young princes, who had the misfortune to be the nephews of Charlemagne and his brother's heirs, were inhumanly murdered.

By the successive conquests of Charlemagne, the Carolingian territories were extended from the banks of the Ebro to those of the Elbe and Lower Danube, and from the rocky coasts of the Baltic to the placid waters of the Mediterranean. The Pyrenees were leaped in one direction and the Alps in another; and the Ebro and the Apennines served rather to mark a frontier, than to fix a boundary to his empire. As protector of the Church, he had the honour of restoring the third Leo to the papal chair, after he had been expelled from Rome by a popular sedition; and so completely did the military success of the hero ignore his crimes, that he was received in the capital of Christendom with eager enthusiasm. Here, too, while kneeling before the altar of St. Peter, during the solemn festival of Christmas, he was publicly crowned by the Pope, who, approaching unobserved, placed an imperial diadem on his head, and saluted him with the acclamation of "Long live Charles Augustus!"

Such was the reward conferred by the religion of the eighth century on an open, undisguised oppressor of the gentler sex, who had shamelessly cast off his innocent wife, despoiled his brother's widow, and murdered her helpless children. Can we wonder that incidents like

these, condoned and sanctioned by the Church, encouraged similar license among the nobles, equally raised above the law, and almost as independent of authority ; and that they tended, by the force of example, to corrupt and debase the great mass of the people ? The same depraved spirit, in fact, pervaded every class, infecting even the inmate of the conventual cell ; and so notorious, at last, were the excesses of the religious houses, that it was found necessary to meet them by a severe and stringent check ; and Christian priests visited the offending nun with the awful punishment adjudged, in more ancient but not darker times, to the condemned heathen Vestal.

The elevation of Charlemagne to the title of Augustus, and his growing power, attracted the attention of Irene, Empress of the East, of whom we have already given some account (see p. 227, *antè*) ; and that ambitious woman having just deposed her son, and taken the precaution of depriving him of his eyes, sought to strengthen her precarious tenure of power by an alliance with the renowned warrior. The overture was well received by Charlemagne, who was not indisposed to ascend the throne of the Cæsars ; but the deposition of Irene by a popular tumult, at the moment when her designs seemed ripe, prevented the completion of the contract.

The same century brought a greater scandal on the Catholic world, in the elevation to the papal chair of a woman, who, alas ! had assumed the garb, but not the insensibility of a monk. Joan, if we may speak of her by her feminine appellation, was born at Metz, and was of humble, though not low origin, having at her command sufficient pecuniary means to carry out her purpose of becoming a votary of learning. Adopting male attire, she proceeded as a student to Athens, where she attended the schools, and was known by the English name of John ;

though, in derision of the effeminacy of her manners, and the blameless tenor of her life, she afterwards received the sobriquet of Agnes, or "the chaste." On the completion of her studies, she repaired to Rome, and obtained the degree of doctor of divinity, acquiring in a short time such a distinguished reputation for wisdom and piety, that, while yet in the flower of her life, she was elected to succeed Leo VI. on the pontifical throne. For two years she governed Christendom with equal moderation and sagacity, when, one morning, while walking in solemn procession through Rome, between the Colosseum and the ancient basilica of St. Peter, her secret transpired, and the head of the Church became a mother in the public street. The same moment witnessed her death, which, perhaps, was not unattended by violence, though history, it must be owned, affords no foundation for the conjecture.

It may well be supposed that a church which claims infallibility would not willingly admit that it was ever subjected to the domination of a woman ; but the facts of this strange episode, however they may be disputed by the controversialists of later times, are supported by irrefragable testimony, being recorded by no less than sixty historians of the Roman communion, including monks and canonized saints. Joan is described by Plutina as John the Eighth ; and Æneas Sylvius, himself a Pope, relates her adventures in his history, and ordered her name to be enrolled in the verified list of Pontiffs, in the registry of Sienna.

More startling stories might be drawn from the archives of the dark ages to illustrate the abuses, the licentiousness, the corruption, and, what exercised a still more fatal influence, the spiritual despotism of Rome. The last, its unvarying characteristic, from the moment that it became leagued with temporal authority, was signally manifested

treatment experienced by Queen Elgiva, consort of King of England, at the hands of Dunstan, a Saxon and saint ; and the career of the latter furnishes a example of the monkish legends of the period. Of birth, and heir to considerable possessions, Dunstan was educated at the celebrated monastery of Glastonbury with the view of qualifying himself, by such knowledge as could then be obtained, for taking a prominent part in public affairs. Endowed with more than ordinary ability, he speedily made himself master of the various sciences of learning, became an accomplished musician, and sought a further employment for his active mind, even directing his attention to mechanics, acquiring considerable skill as a worker of metals. But in the midst of his studies—and probably from pursuing them too eagerly—he was seized by a malignant fever, which, attacking the system for a time bereft him of reason ; and, indeed, he was never to have never wholly recovered his senses, as from that time forward he always believed himself to be surrounded by evil spirits. On his convalescence, the influence of his uncle, Athelen, Archbishop of Canterbury, procured him a formal reception at court ; but his pride, his irritable temper, and his rude overbearing manners, soon raised him a host of enemies, and a dark night affording a favorable opportunity, a party of young nobles drew him into an ambuscade, when he was severely beaten, bound with cords, and flung into a marsh. He was afterwards persuaded by his uncle to enter the Church, and took the monastic vows at Glastonbury, where, in the ascetic spirit of the times, he subjected himself to most rigid austerities, living in a cell too short to admit of his lying down, taking only such food as was absolutely requisite for the support of nature, and spending those hours not devoted to prayer, or to devout vigils,

in arduous labour at the anvil. One day, while thus engaged, he was visited by no less a person than the fiend himself, embodied in human shape,—as he too often is, and who began to indulge in remarks very unsuited to such a holy place and person, but to which, though penetrating his disguise, Dunstan submitted patiently till he had made a pair of tongs red-hot, when he seized his ribald visitor by the nose, making him utter such yells that, according to the legend, they terrified the whole neighbourhood—not a difficult matter, if the sufferer was some unfortunate traveller, only invested with infernal attributes by the diseased imagination of Dunstan. But, be this as it may, the incident thoroughly established the monk's reputation as a saint, and gave him unbounded influence with every class of the people.

Such was the antagonist whom Elgiva, a young and innocent girl, brought up in awful reverence of the priesthood, found arrayed against her, at the moment that, by the death of her husband's father, she was unexpectedly raised to the throne, and might reasonably have anticipated nothing but happiness. The history and fate of this princess still excite our sympathy, even after an interval of nearly a thousand years ; and we try to recall that mild blue eye, that soft, sweet, ringing voice, which, in an age so barbarous, had power to lure the boy king from the idle revels of the court, and enchain him to her side. Edwy was but seventeen when he ascended the throne : Elgiva, whom he espoused in defiance of all opposition, was still younger. It was on the night of his coronation, while the courtiers were engaged in bacchanalian orgies in the hall, that Dunstan, perhaps maddened with wine, made his first savage attack on the youthful Queen. Edwy had stolen out of the hall to his private apartments, to enjoy the society of Elgiva and

other, when the fierce priest rushed into their pre-upbraided him for leaving his guests, and then l furiously on the Queen, threatening to bring both id her mother to the gibbet. Elgiva was naturally ant at such an insult ; and her tears, and perhaps pprehensions, for which the sequel proved that she ut too good grounds, induced Edwy to order the a priest into exile. But, as an ecclesiastic and a

Dunstan was more powerful than a simple king ; arty raised the standard of revolt, and, surrounding alace, made both Edwy and Elgiva prisoners. The rch was pardoned ; but Elgiva, as the rock of e, received the same sentence of banishment which een passed on Dunstan, with the cruel addition of rfeiture of her beauty, and a priest's sacrilegious eared her face with a red-hot iron, to obliterate andiwork of his Maker. Thus disfigured, the poor n was glad to bury herself in obscurity, till time,

forbearing than man, restored her charms, when gain presented herself in England, determined that ower should sever her from her husband. But stan was speedily informed of her return, and, now ted with supreme authority, caused her to be arrested, hrown into a dungeon, where, without bringing her ial, or accusing her of any offence, he commanded o be hamstrung, and she expired in great torture, an ent victim of tyranny, cruelty, and perfidy.

hile women of every rank were subjected to this aring monkish domination, on the other hand they treated with equal severity by the laity ; and the ant who chastised his wife with a stick or a cart-, did but imitate, in a coarser manner, the brutality e prince and noble. A woman of prepossessing ap-ance, or a rich heiress, could not travel on the most

public road, or proceed through the streets of a city, without the protection of a strong escort ; and often even this precaution utterly failed to prevent her abduction. Not unfrequently the spouse of a potent baron was languishing unthought of in a dungeon, while her lord was feasting in his hall ; and a French knight, to whom nursery tales have given the odious name of Bluebeard, murdered three of his wives in succession, and for fourteen years entombed a fourth in the gloomy oubliette of his castle. William of Normandy was so enraged at the rejection of his addresses by Matilda of Flanders, that, according to Ingerius, he attacked her in the middle of the city of Bruges, as she was returning with her ladies from the cathedral, dragged her from her horse, struck her repeatedly with his whip, and then, galloping off, left her to reach her father's palace as she could. Another account states that he actually entered the Earl's castle, and, passing through the astonished attendants, made his way to the private apartments of Matilda, where he seized her by her luxuriant curls, and beat her so severely, that she fell insensible on the floor. Yet this ruffianly and cowardly assault reflected no disgrace on the Norman hero, but, on the contrary, was considered a very spirited feat ; and the lady was so softened by her rough wooing, that she consented, on a second application, to become the bride of her assailant, declaring that he must be a bold and fearless knight who could thus venture into her father's palace to subject her to personal chastisement.

Nor were the resentments and passions of women less fierce, vindictive, or criminal. If there were few of the frowning châteaux of the Rhone and the Rhine, or the stately castles of England, that had not their legends of damsels betrayed, or captive ladies murdered, many had

their dark tale of female violence, their phantom of woman's vengeance, who, as credulity firmly held, might be met at midnight in the silent corridor, the deserted hall, or the solitary ballium. Here was a maiden who, too trustful or too weak, had provoked the stern anger of an implacable parent; here was a forsaken dame, who had perished by suicide, or a broken heart; here again it was a hated, though perhaps innocent beauty, who had fallen by the hand of a furious rival; and the ear caught whispered rumours of a fair lady who had committed such a deed, or who had pawned her soul to the demon. The regal house of Angoulême preserved a reminiscence of one of its progenitors, the wife of Fulke the Quarreller, Count of Anjou, which will serve as an example of these traditions. It is often related by Richard Cœur de Lion as a proof "he was descended from Satan, and that to Satan he must return," and the royal warrior was evidently proud of his assumed lineage. The story affirmed that he, who, notwithstanding his quarrelling propensities, was a very good Christian, took it grievously to heart when his fair consort always quitted church on the elevation of the host; and, determined to cure her of this folly, he one morning gave private instructions to four pages to seize her at the critical moment, and lay her down by her mantle. This mandate was obeyed, but the Countess, with her delicate scruples on point, was not to be overcome by four, or even forty, let them be as sturdy as they might, and, coolly slipping her mantle into their hands, she hopped out of church by the window, leaving behind her a most noxious odour of brimstone, which, as may be imagined, satisfactorily explained both her repugnance to the church and her precipitate disappearance.

But many of these wild legends were founded on real incidents, which have not wholly escaped the grasp of history. Matilda of Flanders, whose alliance with William the Conqueror we have just recorded, had, in the first susceptible years of girlhood, cast glances but too tender on a handsome Saxon, who, on account of the delicacy of his complexion, had received the expressive though not euphonious name of Snaw ; and her advances being coldly met, and ultimately declined, nothing could assuage her wounded pride but the blood of the offender. Her elevation to the throne of England placed him completely in her power ; he was seized, without the shadow of a pretext, by her obsequious myrmidons, and thrown into a dungeon, where he was secretly executed.

This is not the only murder laid to the charge of Matilda. At that period, the priests of the Roman Catholic Church, who have been condemned to celibacy since the commencement of the twelfth century, were allowed to marry ; and the fair daughter of a canon of Canterbury had attracted the attention of William, and estranged him from his domestic ties. Matilda first heard of the fact at a time when the Conqueror was engaged in Normandy, and, availing herself of his absence, she ordered the frail damsel to be put to death, which was done in the most cruel manner, by first cutting the ligatures of her legs, and then slitting her jaws. Old Hearne asserts that William, on hearing what had occurred, was so exasperated at the barbarous conduct of the Queen, that he again subjected her to severe personal castigation ; and from the injuries Matilda received on this occasion she never wholly recovered.

Two influences at length burst through the Egyptian darkness of society, to raise and reclaim man's benighted

mind. One was a religious, the other a poetic impulse ; but both tended, in their effect, though by scarcely susceptible degrees, to inspire all classes with more elevated feelings and more enlarged sympathies. Europe owes an inexpiable debt to the valour of the Crusaders, who, under difficulties of a surprising character, opposed the first effectual check to Mohammedan power ; and we still kindle at the thrilling lays of the romantic Troubadours. The Crusades, though they ended in fanaticism, were undoubtedly prompted, in the first instance, by genuine sentiments of religion. It touched the hardest heart to hear, from the eloquent lips of Peter the Hermit, a recital of the sufferings and wrongs sustained at the hands of the insolent Saracen, by those venerable palmers who crossed seas and deserts to visit the holy shrines of Jerusalem, and monkish zeal failed not to tinge the picture with the darkest colours. Christendom was reminded that this sacred city had been chosen by God as the site of his temple, hallowed by the presence of the prophets, and especially selected as the scene of the incidents and the promulgation of the Gospel ; yet here it was that the Eastern infidels, after ravaging the fairest regions of Asia, had planted their impious and detested standard on the tomb of the Redeemer. The sad tale interested all classes, and both sexes ; and Europe, as one man, flew to arms. Kings left their thrones, barons their castles, bishops their snug cathedral stalls ; and received, from some palmer's hand, the consecrated badge of the cross. From that moment they were dedicated to the expedition ; and all the objects of earthly ambition, all the pleasures of the world, all the claims of nature, were abandoned, repudiated, and cast aside. They had become for the time monks in mail, the difference being that, instead of a missal, they carried lance and shield,

prepared to enforce the precepts and practice of Christianity at the point of the sword.

Such a movement could not convulse society without communicating some of its fervour to woman; and the ties that, at the call of war, were too easily rent by knights and barons, still retained their influence in gentler bosoms. Noble ladies did not scruple to undergo all the hardships then inseparable from a long voyage, and the perils too sure to follow, in order to be within reach of their imperious husbands, although, to obtain this privilege, they took upon themselves the stringent vows of the crusade. Woman's heart, indeed, was equal to a far greater sacrifice, and more than one fair damsel secretly followed her lover to the arid sands of Palestine, disguised as a page, a henchman, or a groom. Nor did the dark daughters of Asia prove less romantic or less intrepid. Several Christian knights owed their release from captivity to the fervour and devotion of Saracen maidens; and one, a German baron, though already wedded in Europe, espoused his deliverer, and subsequently brought her to his castle on the banks of the Rhine, where, far from creating domestic discord, she was received by his Christian wife with the utmost tenderness and consideration.

The Emperor Conrad, who headed the crusade of 1147, included in his army the *élite* of Europe; and not the least formidable of his host was a troop of ladies, distinguished for their personal beauty, and still more by their character, all being trained to arms, habited in military costume, and practised in the duties of the field. They were commanded by a noble dame, who, from her gilt spurs and buskins, obtained the *sobriquet* of "the golden-footed lady;" but we are told nothing of their deeds of arms. Perhaps their influence on the campaign

, after all, most perceptible in the boudoir ; and yet the presence of so many lovely Amazons could not but exhilarate the worn and jaded soldiers.

Three Queens of England, though all of foreign extraction, accompanied their consorts to the battle-ground of Palestine. The first was Eleanora of Aquitaine, at that time united to Louis the Seventh, King of France, though subsequently, through events that will be detailed hereafter, she ascended the English throne as the queen of Henry the Second. Eleanora assumed not only the cross, but the garb, of a Crusader, and many ladies of court followed her example, forming themselves into troops of light horse, and, in this character, submitting to a regular course of martial exercises, in which, by dint of constant practice, they acquired considerable proficiency.

On their first essay at arms in presence of the enemy they were not so successful as it no doubt would have been, had they trusted for victory more to the irresistible darts of their eyes than to those of their quivers. The troop of Amazons, escorted by a band of sturdier warriors, under the command of a distinguished and chivalrous knight, had been sent in advance of the main body of the army, in directions from King Louis to await his arrival on the heights of Laodicea. The sun was just setting as they reached the spot, which, piled with black and dreary rocks, seemed to the inexperienced eye of the Queen a very ineligible place for an encampment, particularly when, as she perceived in the fading light, there was a beautiful valley below, where limpid streams flowed peacefully between emerald banks, overshadowed by rocks. In vain the captain of her escort warned her that, though so charming to the eye, this sequestered spot was wanting in all the essentials of a military position ; that the verdant slopes could be swept by a volley

of arrows from the heights, and that the thick umbrageous woods might conceal an ambuscade. Eleanora insisted on encamping in the valley, and, being menaced by the Arabs, the King, who barely arrived in time to interpose, was obliged to hazard a pitched battle, under circumstances extremely adverse, to prevent her capture. During the action, Louis himself was nearly made prisoner, being compelled to take refuge in a tree, where, surrounded by Saracens, he continued to fight with great intrepidity till a band of chosen troops effected his rescue. The French, though they repulsed their assailants, left several thousand dead on the field, but succeeded in recovering Eleanora and her ladies, who finished their campaign in the castle of Antioch.

Berengaria of Navarre, the betrothed bride of Cœur de Lion, set out for Palestine under the protection of Queen Joanna, the sister of the bridegroom, who, if we may credit the rude rhymes of Piers of Lungtoft, cherished a warm affection for her charge—

“ Queen Joanna held her dear ;
They lived as doves in a cage.”

On reaching Cyprus, the two queens incurred some danger from the hostile designs of a noble freebooter, named Isaac Comnenus, who had established a nest of pirates on that island ; but, through the address of their escort, they contrived to elude his vigilance. Cyprus was afterwards attacked by Richard, who overthrew and deposed Isaac, and, being joined by Berengaria, celebrated his espousals in the Cypriot capital with the liveliest demonstrations of joy.

In 1270, Eleanora of Castile accompanied her illustrious consort, Edward the First, then Prince Edward, to the third holy war, and was present before Acre, when

one of the tribe of the Ansayrii, or "assassins," made his way into Edward's tent, and, while pretending to deliver a letter, attacked the prince with a poisoned dagger, inflicting a severe gash in his arm. The miscreant was instantly slain by Edward; and an old legend asserts, that Eleanora, utterly regardless of herself, sucked the poison from her husband's wound, and by this means saved his life. The story, however, is wholly repudiated by modern chroniclers, though it is difficult to imagine how it could have passed current at the time, when, as we are now taught, it was without the shadow of a foundation.

If the Crusades tended to enlarge the ideas and the intelligence of Europe, by opening an intercourse with remote countries, and especially with the luxurious capital of the East, where literature and civilization still maintained a last feeble stand, they derived a fresh impulse, a softening and refining tone, from the minstrelsy of Provence. The woody dells and smiling valleys of that beautiful land, where the Muses found a congenial retreat, suddenly burst forth with a flood of song, so tender, so impassioned, so glowing, that it awoke an echo in every heart. War alone had evoked the wild cadences of the bards of ancient Britain, who delighted to dwell on the muster of savage warriors, the fierceness and horror of their aspect, the march to battle, the attack, the bloody and glorious fray; but the Troubadours, while rendering eager homage to heroic deeds, attuned their strains to the softer measures of love. Their romantic lays revived in the steeled breast the dormant germs of human kindness, kindling the first sparks of that spirit which has received the proud name of chivalry, though, in its highest development, this refined gold of the dark ages was, in fact, but unmitigated pinchbeck. Yet a

sensible improvement was undoubtedly effected by the *chansons* of the Troubadours. They celebrated, in thrilling verse, the clemency, as well as the valour, of the successful warrior, and awarded higher praise to his magnanimity and generosity than to his courage. Above all, they claimed a deference and tender consideration for woman, for her weakness, her gentleness, and her beauty, which, though the amelioration was originally more apparent than real, and confined to empty words and ceremonies, paved the way for her advancement to a more secure, more dignified, and more natural position.

The Troubadours were not only the recognised acclaimers of virtue : they were the censors of vice, extending from land to land, from castle to castle, the fame of the noble and good, and the infamy of the wicked. To them we owe the foundation of the great moral safeguard of public opinion. Those haughty barons, who laughed at the restraints of law, and mocked at the admonition of the priest, trembled, while they jeered, at the pungent taunts of a Provençal satire ; and even kings learnt to respect and dread these terrible minstrels. Henry Beaulerc was so exasperated by the songs of Luke de Barré, a Norman troubadour, originally one of his friends, that on taking him prisoner, he barbarously put out his eyes. The Earl of Flanders, his father-in-law, sought to divert the monarch from this cruel deed, but he furiously exclaimed—" No, sir, no ! this fellow, a wit and a minstrel forsooth, hath made me the subject of his ribald songs, and raised horse-laughs at my expense ; and since it hath pleased God to deliver him into my hands, he shall not escape unpunished."

But love was the favourite theme of the Troubadours ; and their feelings, no less than their soft and swelling stanzas, were chiefly engrossed by the fair. Their assem-

as were called Courts of Love, and were held in presence the belles of the day, including princesses and queens, listening to the various compositions, adjudged the use of their applause to the most successful poet. A troubadour was licensed to fix his Platonic but romantic action on any lady in Christendom, however exalted rank, or irreproachable her character; and a minstrel of Normandy, a boon companion of Cœur de Lion's, made his love to the Princess Eleanora of England, the king's sister, declaring at every court of Europe that she was well aware of his attachment—for *she could read*. Another, still more ethereal, fell in love with a noble lady whom he had never seen, and was so consumed by his imaginary passion, that he followed her, in a dying state, to Constantinople, where, struck down by a mortal sickness, he sent to implore his unknown mistress to make him happy by her presence, ere his sorrowful pilgrimage was brought to a close. She flew to his couch, received his vows, and saw him expire, his last look raised fondly her face, and her name the last word on his lips.

Jousts and tournaments were among the first fruits of the improved tone of feeling created by the Troubadours. These exhibitions of knightly prowess, though frequently turning into violence and bloodshed, were indeed, in their origin, not without a civilizing and refining influence. Instituted in honour of woman, they held her up as a being in whom every virtue was concentrated, and whose gentle approbation was the noblest of rewards; and, by converting this maxim into a code, they threw a mantle of sentiment over the barbaric panoply of knight-errantry, which was reflected alike in the device on its buckler, and in its altered deportment. Each combatant maintained with lance and sword the surpassing excellence or superior virtue of his chosen lady-love, wearing on his

arm some token of her favour, and having his love and his principles prominently emblazoned, in a concise and piquant motto, on his banner, his helm, or his shield. A lady of royal or noble birth, selected for her eminent personal loveliness, and dignified with the proud title of Queen of Beauty, presided over the spectacle ; and from her hands the conqueror received the coveted insignia of victory. The presence of high-born and beautiful women acted both as a stimulus and a restraint, and men began to acquire a marked amenity of manners, when, even in the arena of the lists, courtesy and a polite bearing were esteemed qualities as essential in a knight as dexterity and courage.

The most memorable tournament held on English ground during the dark ages, was that of Ashby, which was attended by knights from every country of Christendom. An open spot was generally chosen for the lists, so as to afford ample room both for the show and the spectators ; but Edward the Third, who was extremely fond of chivalrous exercises, and liked to parade them before his subjects, exhibited a tournament in the heart of London. The spectacle nearly cost the Queen her life ; for while all were eagerly watching its progress, the scaffolding supporting the royal box gave way, and brought Philippa and her ladies to the ground. Edward, with his customary ferocity, instantly ordered the carpenters who had erected the scaffold to be put to death ; but the humane Queen, who had sustained no injury, interposed in their behalf, and obtained their pardon.

The impetus given to civilization by these various influences was, though decided in effect, extremely slow in operation. For several centuries society remained unreformed, whatever advance might be made by individuals ; and woman, equally with man, indulged in all

follies, and all its excesses, while her weakness left her exposed to all its atrocities.

The life of Eleanora of Aquitaine furnishes a forcible illustration of the career of a dame of quality in that dark and stormy era ; for though she became the consort of two kings, by birth Eleanora was only of ducal rank. Possessed of the rich territory of Aquitaine, her hand was early secured for Louis VII., surnamed *Le Jeune* ; and, after receiving the coronet of the duchy, she was admitted to share the regal throne of France. Her adventures as a crusader we have already recorded ; but, whatever her exploits in a military capacity, she did not return from the Holy Land with unblemished reputation as a lady. Her intrigues with Count Raymond, her kinsman, at Acre, though affording matter for great scandal, were, however, less culpable than her flirtation with a handsome Saracen, who wooed the Queen of France from the camp of Saladin. After her return to Europe, these indiscretions were more openly practised ; and Eleanora made a jest of the shaven head of her husband, while, in presence of the whole court, she paid unbecoming attention to his attractive vassal, Geoffrey Plantagenet, Duke of Normandy. From Geoffrey the volatile Queen turned to his son Henry, who, in his nineteenth year, succeeded his father in the dukedom, and afterwards, as Henry the Second, assumed the royal sceptre of England. King Louis, though of a patient disposition, could at last no longer restrain his anger ; Henry was commanded to leave the court ; and the discreet Queen was gratified rather than punished, by divorce. Thus set free, she hastened to present her devoted hand to her lover, to whom she was already betrothed ; but so rich a prize could hardly be expected to pass in safety through France ; and Eleanora had several narrow escapes from matrimony before she was

joined by Henry. At one place, her host, a Count Thibaut, proposed marriage at their first meeting, and a precipitate flight saved her from the yoke of a compulsory union. At another, she was to have been surprised by an ambuscade, which an eager lover, who had never seen her face, but knew the value of her ample dower, had prepared for her reception. But, by good fortune and her rare address, she eluded all these dangers, and reaching Aquitaine, celebrated her espousals with Henry six brief weeks after her divorce from Louis.

Eleanora was soon to discover that, though he had ostensibly made her his wife, Henry had previously contracted a marriage with another lady—Rosamond Clifford, whose family was as respectable, if not as illustrious, as her own. During a sojourn at Woodstock, she had accidentally observed the King following a clue of silk through a labyrinth of trees, in which he suddenly disappeared; and her jealous eye quickly unveiled the mystery, and discovered the retreat of a rival. Chroniclers, with their customary discord, differ materially as to the issue of this incident, which is variously related; but, in such cases, we may safely adopt the popular tradition, particularly when, as in this instance, it is in keeping with the character both of the person and the times. According to the legend, Fair Rosamond was abruptly confronted by the Queen, who, with a torrent of reproaches, offered her the alternative of a cup of poison or a dagger, and did not quit the spot till the victim of her jealousy was no more.

But the removal of Rosamond, however effected, neither regained for Eleanora the affections of her consort, nor tended to promote her domestic peace. Her family circle, indeed, presented a dreadful embodiment of all the horrors of the age. Her children were arrayed

gainst each other, against their father, and against herself; her husband was a libertine and an assassin, and, neglecting her, installed in her place the profligate wife of his son. In her despair, she remembered the affection and tender indulgence of Louis, the spouse of her youth and first object of her love; and, disguising herself in the attire of a page, she eloped from a castle in Aquitaine, intending to seek an asylum in his dominions. But she was overtaken, before she could escape from the duchy, by the Norman myrmidons of Henry, and, again in his power, was thrown into prison, where she remained for sixteen years under restraint, till the accession of her son, the renowned Cœur de Lion, restored her to liberty and power.

The last days of Eleanora brought out the latent virtues of her character, atoning for many of her past errors and past crimes, and proving how completely, in one point of view, her perversion was the effect, not of innate vice, but of example and training. The thoughtless season of youth had been passed in the giddy quest of pleasure, of power, and of revenge, without reference to the cost, the means, or the consequences: age came, with its bitter experiences, to teach her the vanity of such pursuits—to show her the emptiness and deceitful hollowness of the world, and all it has to bestow. The loss of her favourite son Richard, on his return from Palestine, where he had so signalized his valour and daring, was one of the most poignant sorrows of her declining years. Travelling home across Europe, Richard accidentally approached the city of Vienna, the residence and capital of his sworn enemy Leopold, Archduke of Austria, and was discovered in the disguise of a Templar, while turning the spit in the kitchen of an hostelry. Leopold, in accordance with the spirit of the time, which

regarded neither the laws of hospitality nor of human kindness, instantly threw him into a dungeon, and it is said exposed him to be torn to pieces by a lion, which Richard, though without arms, by his mere physical strength, overcame and destroyed. Accident at length revealed to Europe the situation of the missing hero. In the days of his prosperity, Richard had contracted a chivalrous friendship for a celebrated troubadour, named Blondel, who, on hearing of his disappearance, devoted himself to the task of ascertaining his fate. In pursuit of this object, he presented himself, in the course of his protracted wanderings, before the gloomy castle of Tenebreuse, in Germany, where Richard was confined; and, singing beneath its towers the first stanza of a canzonet composed by the King, it was answered from within by the second, on which he felt satisfied that he had now unravelled the mystery, and hastened to communicate his discovery to Eleanora. The sorrowing Queen lost not a moment in turning his tidings to account, and, by her representations and exertions, enlisted all Europe in the interest of Richard. Her letter to the Pope at this critical period gives a melancholy picture of her grief, her distraction, and her remorse. She describes herself as "*Eleanora, by the wrath of God, Queen of England,*" and her scribe, Peter de Blois, as he proceeds with the epistle, thus notes down one of her passionate outbursts:—"O, Mother of Mercy! look upon a wretched mother! Suffer not thy Son, the source of pity, to visit on the child the sins of the parent, but rather let him chastise me, who am indeed guilty, and spare my innocent son. Miserable that I am, why have I, after being twice a queen, survived to experience the sad afflictions of age!" Her unremitting efforts to procure the liberation of Richard, though met by difficulties and impediments

at every turn, were ultimately crowned with success ; and a heavy ransom from his loyal subjects restored England her King. Trouble and family afflictions continued to mark the life of Eleanora, till, in 1204, she closed her mortal career, reformed and deeply penitent, and was borne to that narrow house where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.

The life of Eleanora of Aquitaine affords an example of a woman of high courage, great decision of purpose, and, perhaps, but little virtue, now submitting to, now boldly repelling, or subtly eluding, the yoke which the barbarous character of the times had imposed on her sex. Another Eleanora, an English princess, daughter of Edward the Second, shows us, in a later generation, the subdued, patient, suffering wife, roused to indignant resistance by the same inexorable spirit. This illustrious lady had been married, at the tender age of fifteen, to the stern Raynald II., Earl of Gueldres and Zutphen, afterwards raised to a dukedom by the Emperor Louis ; and had brought her consort a dower worthy of an English princess. The union was blessed, in a few years, by a family of beautiful children, the hope and pride of the little state, while the Duchess was not more admired for her personal loveliness than venerated for her virtues. But the stout Duke Raynald had by this time spent her dower ; and, the treasure gone, began to grow weary of his spouse. Pondering how to procure a divorce, for which he could find no pretext in her blameless life, he adopted the bold step of informing the papal authorities that she was afflicted with leprosy. The Duchess, though surrounded by spies, was secretly apprised of his designs, and met them by a measure equally bold, but wholly free from reproach. Arrayed in a tunic, which covered but a portion of her body, she enveloped herself in a capacious

mantle, and, leading two of her children by the hand, entered the council-room of the palace, at the moment that the Duke was about to make a statement of his intentions to his assembled nobles. "I am come, my beloved lord," she cried, "to seek a diligent examination respecting the corporeal taint imputed to me. Let it be seen now whether I am really afflicted with leprosy." And with these words, she threw off her cloak, disclosing the delicate but healthy texture of her skin, while eloquent tears bedewed her cheeks. "These," she continued, "are my children and yours : do they, too, share in the blemish of their mother ? But it may come to pass that the people of Gueldres may yet mourn our separation, when they behold the failure of our line." An incident so affecting and so sublime, softened both the Duke and his nobles ; the royal pair were reconciled ; but the male line of Raynald, as the Duchess had almost predicted, failed in his son, and the ducal crown passed into the female branch.

The spirit of romantic chivalry and tender devotion which the influence of woman had aroused in the Troubadours, may, perhaps, be seen in its most refined aspect in the sonnets of Petrarch. The soft name of Laura is indissolubly associated with the muse of the Italian poet. It was on a Good Friday, the 6th of April, 1327, as we learn from Leonard Simpson's highly interesting work on the *Literature of Italy*, that Petrarch, while attending worship in the church of St. Clara, at Avignon, first beheld the enchanting maiden. He saw and loved ; but his love, as we may gather from his sonnets, was as spiritual as his imagination. It was raised above the taint, the corruption, and the barbarism of his era, and hence may have arisen the magic power of his lyre. Laura, indeed, was at this time a wife, having in 1325, when in her

teenth year, married Hugo, son of Paul de Sade ; and, consequently, was inaccessible to the poet's addresses. But he continued to make her the subject of his melting rics, and was greatly afflicted by her death, which occurred in 1348, when she fell a victim to the plague. The monarch was prepared for the event by a vision, in which the spectral figure of Laura forewarned him of her death. His grief," says Mr. Simpson, "found utterance in some of his finest sonnets. In the first he wrote after her death, he declares himself incapable of expressing his feelings—

" ' Hor qual fasse il dolor qui non si stima,
Chi a pena oca pensarne l' non ch' io sia,
Ardita di parlarne in versi o 'n rima.' "

The spread of such chivalrous sentiments led to the institution by Cœur de Lion of the noble Order of the Garter, which, in 1344, was revived by Edward the Third, and decorated with its present motto. Froissart seems to mention the story which associates the revival of the Order with Edward's passion for the Countess of Salisbury, whose garter he is said to have picked up, and presented to her in presence of the court, with this exclamation : *Qu'en soit qui mal y pense*. There is no doubt that the young monarch was a devoted admirer of the Countess, and the knightly chronicler, in describing their first interview, inserts fully into the history of his attachment. The fair lady had been besieged in her husband's castle of Wark, near Berwick, by the King of Scotland, when Edward, at the head of a powerful army, advanced to her relief, compelling the Scots to retreat. At the interview which followed, " King Edward kept his eyes so fixed upon the Countess, that the gentle dame was quite abashed. After he had examined his apartment, he retired to a window, and leaning on it, fell into a profound reverie." This was

an ominous symptom, and, in darker times, a royal lover, so decidedly smitten, might not have been left without encouragement. But woman, after so long yielding to the stream, had begun to assume her natural position ; and, as she enjoyed the esteem of others, learnt to respect herself. The Countess was in the keeping of her own integrity and uprightness, and saw no guile and no perfidy in her guest. "Dear sire," she asked innocently of the King, "what are you musing on ? Such meditation is not proper for you, saving your grace." "Oh, sweet lady !" replied the monarch, "you must know that, since I have been in this castle, some thoughts have oppressed my mind that I was not before aware of." "Dear sire, you ought to be of good cheer, and leave off such pondering ; for God has been very bountiful to you in your undertakings. Therefore, if it please you, we will to the hall to your nobles ; for dinner will straightway be served." "There be other things, O sweet lady, which touch my heart, and lie heavy there, beside what you talk of. In good truth, your beauteous mien and the perfection of your face and behaviour, have wholly overcome me ; and my peace depends on your accepting my love, which your refusal cannot abate." "Oh, my dread lord !" exclaimed the Countess, "I cannot believe you are in earnest ; for assuredly this would neither redound to your glory, nor add to your happiness." And with these words, she quitted the apartment, and took care to afford the King no further opportunity of prosecuting his suit. Edward, however, though discouraged, continued to regard her with the same feelings, and on bidding her adieu, again pleaded his love and his devotion. The reply of the Countess was poetic in its simplicity, and heroic in its sentiment. "My gracious liege," she exclaimed, "God of his infinite goodness preserve you, and drive from your

noble heart all evil thoughts ; for I am, and ever shall be, ready to serve you ; but only in what is consistent with my honour and your own."

The first chapter of the Garter was graced by the presence of the good Queen Philippa, another bright example of the advancement and elevation of the sex. Many, indeed, were the instances in which the benign influence of this amiable Queen was exerted to modify and restrain the passions of her consort. We have already mentioned her interposition in behalf of the luckless carpenters, at the tournament of Cheapside ; and who does not remember, with an admiration which centuries have failed to diminish, how promptly and effectually she threw herself between the King and the twelve citizens of Calais, condemned to an ignominious death for their patriotism and heroism ! At the chapter of the Garter, she was attended by the principal ladies of the court, who, with herself, were admitted Dame-Companions of the Order, and the wives of the Knights continued to enjoy this dignity during several succeeding reigns.

In that rude age, when persons of noble birth were the observed of all observers, the humbler classes were affected, far more than at present, by the principles and conduct of their superiors ; and the improved tone of the higher produced a corresponding effect in the lower walks of life. It had been well were this result accompanied, as it easily might have been, by some community of feeling ; but the proud barons were still the representatives of the haughty Norman bandits, who trampled on the dearest rights of the commonalty, while they insulted and defied the prerogatives of the crown. Viewed with distrust by the sovereign, they were universally detested by the people ; and we now look back with

a shudder at their inhumanity, their insolence, their violence, their cruel exactions, and their repeated treasons. A deep resentment had long been smouldering in the breast of the nation, when a tax-collector, in levying the odious impost of the poll-tax, barbarously insulted a young girl, the daughter of a blacksmith, and was instantly struck dead by her father. The collector was in the service of the King ; but it is a striking indication of the popular feeling of the time, that the rebellion of Wat Tyler, invoked by this incident, was directed solely against the usurping tyranny of the barons. This principle was emphatically announced by the rebels in their motto—

“ When Adam delved and Eve span,
Who was then a gentleman ? ”

At first the misguided rabble carried all before them, and, marching on London, seized and beheaded many persons of rank, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, and, for a time, endangered the safety of the Queen. But a simple civic functionary, the intrepid Sir William Wallworth, by boldly slaying Tyler, delivered the crown and the country from ruin, when they were left to their fate by the recreant barons.

It has always been the aim of the Kings of England, from the time of the great Alfred, to raise up a counterpoise to the power of the aristocracy, by basing the royal authority on the affections, the sympathies, and the suffrages of the people. To this wise policy we owe our present enduring accord, prosperity, security, and freedom. Our admirable constitution secures to each class a proportionate influence in the commonwealth, while all are bound, both by interest and feeling, to uphold the venerable fabric of the throne. This happy result was not brought about in a moment, but was the slow fruit

of successive centuries : it was not achieved by a single effort, but by ages of strife and bloodshed, and the contest, we may be sure, fell with no light hand on woman either as regards her social position, her domestic relations, or her destiny.

The Temple garden, according to Shakespeare, was the scene of the memorable interview, which obtained for our first civil war the poetic designation of "the Roses." There it was that Plantagenet exclaimed—

" Let him that is a true-born gentleman,
And stands upon the honour of his birth,
If he suppose that I have pleaded truth,
From off this briar pluck a white rose with me."

To which Somerset replies—

" Let him that is no coward nor no flatterer,
But dare maintain the party of the truth,
Pluck a red rose from off this thorn with me."

The calamities which the ambitious and unscrupulous Plantagenet deliberately brought on his native land, were to form the chief incidents in the life of a beautiful and heroic, if too impetuous Queen. Margaret of Anjou was the daughter of a royal bard, who, through various channels of ancestry, was titular sovereign of at least half a dozen realms, though unfortunately they were, as far as he was concerned, as visionary and unreal as any fiction of his muse. Margaret, however, though she had no treasures, brought her consort, Henry the Sixth, a rich dower of beauty, talent, learning, and taste. "There was no princess in Christendom," observes a contemporary historian, "so accomplished as my lady Marguerite of Anjou." Nor was she deficient in more solid and more sterling qualities. Trained in the school of misfortune, she had learnt, in the first impressible years of life, the

bitter uses of adversity ; and the lesson was not a void—for though, at first, appearances betokened otherwise, she was destined to tread the same thorny path to the end of her career. As she touched the soil of England, racks of dark thick clouds, which had for some time been lowering round, burst into a fearful storm ; and rolling thunder pealed an awful salute to the trembling Queen. A short period of happiness and triumph followed her union with Henry, which was solemnized at Titchfield, just as she entered her sixteenth year. Detraction, however, dogged her steps from the moment she quitted her father's court, and the great muse of Shakespeare has lent its sanction to calumnies, for which, after the most diligent search, there appears to be no other ground than the malice of her enemies. The growing turmoil of the age and the imbecility of Henry invited her aspiring spirit to take an active part in public affairs, and she was undoubtedly led into various unconstitutional acts, which, in a more tranquil period, would have been better avoided. But, in contemplating the character of Margaret, we must remember the circumstances in which she was placed, and look with indulgence on the indiscretions of a princess, who, in a strange land, surrounded by hostile peers and a misguided populace, found she could rely for support on none but herself. At length, the lawless barons broke into open revolt ; and it is a forcible illustration of the state of society at the time, that one of these feudal despots, the Earl of Warwick, was alone able, by the number of his vassals, to turn the scale in favour of whatever party he espoused ; and, from the facility with which he changed from side to side, acquired the significant appellation of the King-maker. But Margaret, maintaining her royal dignity, was not to be intimidated by this fierce paladin ; and when called upon to arbitrate between

him and the illustrious Somerset, she gave her voice in favour of the latter, boldly exclaiming, "I am of this party, and will uphold it." The civil war found her equal to the position she had seized, and the prerogatives she claimed; and she maintained the arduous contest, through good report and evil, in success and in adversity, with the same resolute, unbending spirit. After her severe defeat at Northampton, she collected a new army with incredible rapidity, and advancing to Wakefield, besieged the Duke of York in his own castle, taunting him with cowardice, in "suffering himself to be braved by a woman." York, whose courage was his ruling sentiment, was goaded into giving her battle; and it has been asserted that Margaret actually took part in the engagement, which terminated in a complete victory for the Lancastrians, sullied, however, by the indignities offered to the mangled body of York, and by other atrocities. But to follow Margaret through all the vicissitudes of her career would require a volume, and these pages can afford her but a niche. There is, however, one incident, typical of the romantic adventures in which she was sometimes engaged, and illustrating also the temper of the times, which it would be an omission not to record. It was after the sanguinary battle of Hexham, that Margaret, with the young Prince of Wales, flying through the forest, on her way to the Scottish border, was captured by a gang of robbers, such as then infested every part of unhappy England. The costly attire of the fugitives revealed their rank, and the brigands seized Margaret by her luxuriant tresses, and dragged her before their chief, stripping her on the way of all her ornaments and valuables, and even threatening to take her life. Death she did not fear; but she besought them, in a voice choked with emotion, not to mutilate or disfigure

her body, which would prevent its being identified, frankly confessing that she was the Queen of England, and as such might well ask this forbearance ; but the ruffianly plunderers, insensible to every sentiment of honour and virtue, would probably have paid little regard to her wishes, and she might have been sacrificed to their thirst of blood, if, at this juncture, they had not begun to quarrel among themselves respecting the division of the booty. The Queen, seizing the favourable moment, with the tact and address she so well knew how to exercise, turned to one of her train, a sturdy squire, who was looking mournfully on, and vehemently exclaimed, " By the passion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—have pity upon me, and enable me to escape !" The squire could not resist such an appeal from his mistress, a beautiful woman and a Queen. " Mount behind me, madam," he replied, " and put my Lord Prince before, and I will deliver you or die in the attempt !" In an instant the Queen and Prince were on the saddle, the loyal squire clapped spurs to his horse, and before the gang were alarmed, they were galloping furiously through the forest.

Night overtook the fugitives, while they were still buried among the trees ; and, jaded and exhausted, enveloped in darkness, and uncertain where to bend their steps, they were giving themselves up to despair, when a glimpse of moonlight, falling through a sylvan glade, exposed a tall figure in armour, standing at the mouth of a cave, as if patiently awaiting their approach. The man, there could be no doubt, was another freebooter—perhaps one of the gang so lately eluded ; but the undaunted Queen had formed a bold resolution, such as the emergency required, and, springing from the saddle, she took the hand of her child and led him up to the robber.

"Here, my friend," she cried, "save the son of your King. Gold we have none to give you, for robbers have already despoiled us; but it is the unfortunate Queen of England who has now fallen into your hands in her desolation and distress; and, O man! if thou hast any knowledge of God, I beseech you, for his sake, to have compassion on my misery!" And, placing the young Prince in his arms, she added, "I charge you to preserve and defend this innocent Prince, whom I now consign to your care." The outlaw, man of violence though he was, was overcome by her appeal, and, throwing himself at her feet, declared, with a flood of tears, that he would die a thousand deaths rather than abandon the Prince, or betray the trust she had reposed in him. And he kept his word, remaining to the last one of her most devoted adherents.

It need not be related here how the long struggle of Margaret, chequered in its course by all the accidents of war, terminated in the murder of her son and her pious consort, and in her own ignominious captivity. From this she was at length released, and returning to her native Provence, she closed her sad and eventful career in an humble château, in the fifty-first year of her age, leaving behind her a name and story that, while great deeds are remembered, will never be forgotten. In the "Lives of the Queens of England," Miss Strickland makes mention of an interesting relic of Margaret, still in existence, which tells the sad moral of her history. It is a breviary, in which the poor Queen has written these words, "*Vanité des vanités, tout la vanité!*"

The same spirit of baronial ambition and intestine strife which effected such ravages in England, passed like a whirlwind over France, leaving it exposed both to the unscrupulous designs of domestic traitors and to foreign invasion.

The privileges of seignory, instead of elevating, had degraded the nobility, while they had corrupted and debased the humbler classes ; and Cressy and Poitiers, and, in the next century, Agincourt, beheld the proud chivalry of France shamefully turning their backs on a handful of English yeomen. Such a spectacle made the people aware that their arrogant oppressors were but men, endued with like fears with themselves ; and, at the same time, afforded a suggestive and dangerous example. On a sudden the peasantry rose in a mass against their lords ; castles, villages, and towns were assaulted, captured, and sacked ; and an infuriated jacquerie, sparing neither age nor sex, carried ruin, destruction, and anarchy through the whole kingdom.

The death of Henry the Fifth left France at liberty to attempt the recovery of her independence, with the advantage of contending on her own soil against the forces of a foreign power, directed by the feeble hand of a Viceroy and the distracted counsels of a Regency. But the energy of the people was inadequate to the contest, and, after a few desperate encounters, they were obliged to concentrate their force for a final struggle in the city of Orleans. This last bulwark of the French monarchy was quickly invested by the English, and now fixed the attention of Europe. Among those who, unknown and unobserved, listened with eager ears to every account of the progress and prospects of the siege, was a girl of seventeen, who filled the humble station of servant at an inn, in which character, when not engaged in the work of the house, she assisted the ostler, dressed and groomed the horses of the guests, and conducted them to the watering-place. This employment, by mere force of habit, rendered her an expert horsewoman, while it gave her a taste for rough and manly exercises ; and the incidents of the siege, related in her

hearing by eye-witnesses, often personally engaged in the struggle, fired her imagination, and invoked in her bosom a patriotic devotion to her sovereign and country. Suddenly she announced herself as commanded by Heaven to raise the siege of Orleans, and crown Charles the Seventh in the ancient city of Rheims. As might be expected, her pretensions only excited derision, till, persevering in these bold assertions, the most incredulous were struck by the burning eloquence of her enthusiasm, by her commanding manner, her youth, her innocence, and her beauty. Baudricourt, the governor of the neighbouring town of Vancouleurs, sent her to the king, at Chinon, and though Charles put forward a favourite courtier in his place, and stood among the crowd as a spectator, she instantly singled him out, addressed him in the name of the Almighty, declared her intention of relieving Orleans, and demanded as the instrument of her future victories an antique sword, preserved in the church of St. Catherine de Fierbois. The monarch, whether influenced by superstition or policy, or by a combination of both, accepted and recognised her mission, which was solemnly approved by a synod of divines ; and Joan, mounted on horseback, clad in armour, and girt with the sword from the shrine of St. Catherine, was presented to the people as a messenger from Heaven. Her picturesque appearance, her personal attractions, and the dexterity with which she managed her fiery steed, the result of her training at the hostelry, gave an air of reality to her assumed character, and she was saluted with the most rapturous acclamations. In a few days she set out with a convoy for Orleans, which she entered in triumph, cutting her way through the fortified lines of the English, and striking their boldest leaders with dismay. This feeling, so natural in a superstitious age, was deepened by her subsequent conduct, by the skill and

fortitude she displayed in defence of the city, and by her repeated brilliant sorties, in which, valiantly throwing herself into the thick of the fight, she bore down all opposition, and so weakened and depressed our sturdy countrymen, that, at length, their commanders were compelled to raise the siege.

Joan had now fulfilled one object of her mission ; the other, which was to crown the King at Rheims, seemed even more chimerical. The ancient capital was in a distant part of the kingdom, and the whole intervening country was occupied by the English, whose posts and strong garrisons, placed at all the prominent points, commanded every part of the road. No sooner, however, had the maiden warrior effected the liberation of Orleans, than she called upon Charles to accompany her to Rheims, for the purpose of receiving from her hands the crown of France. The monarch, though sensible of the danger and difficulty of the enterprise, responded to her summons, and set out from Chinon at the head of 12,000 men. He had no reason to repent of his temerity ; the English, not yet recovered from their panic, and regarding Joan as a witch, invested with supernatural power, did not venture to oppose him ; every town threw open its gates at his approach, and reaching Rheims, Joan placed on his brow the diadem of Charlemagne.

Would we could end this story of woman's heroism with the pomp and glitter of the coronation, when the heroine's name, now ennobled, rang in triumphant shouts from every lip ; and gateful millions hailed her as a champion and deliverer. It was at this moment, indeed, that Joan wished to retire, having successfully accomplished the task for which she considered herself to have been raised up ; but she was unfortunately persuaded by Dunois to enter a city then besieged by the English, and undertake its

defence. Now familiar with her presence, our countrymen had recovered their native valour ; and in heading a sortie from the beleaguered town, Joan was made prisoner, and carried with exulting shouts into the English camp. A court of gloomy warriors found her guilty of witchcraft, and this fair young creature, in the bloom of her beauty and her life—for she had but just reached her nineteenth year—after performing prodigies of valour in the field, and earning a fame not more brilliant than pure, was condemned to be burnt alive, and actually perished at the stake.

While the great kingdoms of England and France were distracted by civil contention or foreign war, the state of society in Italy was no less pitiable, corrupt, and degraded. That beautiful and extensive peninsula, once the garden of the world, had never wholly recovered from the ravages of the barbarous hordes of Germany and the North during the later period of the empire ; and, through all the succeeding ages, it had repeatedly been the prey of the various neighbouring powers, or of domestic tyrants and factions. Such a *régime* necessarily unhinged the whole fabric of society, and the vices of the other countries of Christendom were here developed in frightful luxuriance, and under circumstances more than usually revolting. The family of the Borgias affords a striking example of the ineradicable depravity of the community. The father, Alexander, occupied the papal throne : his mistress, Vaccozzia, was a member of an influential Roman family ; his two sons were elevated to the rank of princes ; and his daughter, the beautiful and gifted, though frail Lucretia, married successively three noble husbands. Cæsar Borgia has been aptly described as “great amongst the wicked,” and embodied in his character, with a fierce and implacable will, every vice

that disgraces nature. After dyeing his hands in the blood of his brother, he became the ready instrument of all the atrocious schemes of his father ; and these two monsters, one of whom was the head of the Christian world, kept in their pay a regular band of assassins, who were constantly employed in removing their opponents with the dagger. Others were carried off by poison, administered in the convivial cup or the tempting pasty ; and it was at a banquet of this description, prepared for the destruction of nine wealthy cardinals, who had appointed the Borgias their heirs, that Alexander the Sixth unexpectedly met his death, drinking by mistake the wine which, in an evil hour, he had prepared exclusively for his guests. Cæsar, by the help of a vigorous constitution, recovered, but soon afterwards received a mortal wound under the walls of Viana, in Spain, while serving as a volunteer in the army of his brother-in-law, John D'Albret, King of Navarre ; and died exclaiming, " I have prepared in my life for everything but death."

Lucretia Borgia, to whom our narrative more especially applies, shared the vices, if not the crimes of her family, and is associated in the vilest character with her father and her two brothers. This imputation, indeed, has been disputed by Roscoe, but the apostolic journals leave no doubt of the scandalous irregularity of her life, which even in that age was a proverb. In her infancy she had been betrothed to a gentleman of Arragon ; but her father on his elevation to the pontificate, cancelled this engagement, and her hand was given to Jean Sforza, the wealthy Seigneur of Pesaro, and one of the most potent nobles of Italy. While the marriage was yet but recent, an opportunity presented itself of forming a more auspicious alliance, and a shameful pretext was found, by the pliant Curia, for dissolving the union with Sforza,

when Lucretia became the bride of Alphonse, Duc de Bresiglia, son of Alphonse the Second, King of Arragon. The second husband fell by the poniard of Cæsar, who, on forming an alliance with the French party, was desirous of breaking off all connexion with the royal family of Arragon, and, to effect this object, made his willing sister a widow. But she was soon provided with a third consort, in the person of Alphonse d'Este, son of the Duke of Ferrara, an amiable and accomplished prince, at whose court, removed from the pernicious influence of her relatives, she threw off her vicious habits, and for the remainder of her life conducted herself in an irreproachable and even exemplary manner. Gathering around her a circle of poets and scholars, she became a benefactress to literature, as well as a liberal patroness of its professors; and having survived all her family, expired, at an advanced age, amidst the regrets and tears of her household, her dependents, and her subjects.

Spain, the first conquest of barbarism, when the fall of Rome shook with an earthquake the rising nations of Europe, at this time advanced, under the sway of a woman, to the highest point of greatness. Enslaved in the eighth century by the Moors, it had for ages been parcelled out in small kingdoms, connected by no ties of consanguinity, fraternity, or language, but, on the contrary, cherishing the most bitter hatred of each other, and desolating that fruitful land with the hereditary feuds of the desert. The Christian power was gradually restored over the greater part of the country, divided into three independent states,—Castile, Navarre, and Arragon, while that of the Moors, receding behind the inaccessible fastnesses of Granada, still maintained a barbaric splendour in the golden halls of the Alhambra. It is to the court of Arragon we must turn for a moment

to catch a glimpse of the evil character of the *régime* and the age. The crown of that kingdom, the second in extent and importance of the Spanish monarchies, had devolved on the ferocious John, a crafty and ambitious prince, married to a consort of kindred temper, whom he had raised from a private station to share his throne. Their eldest son Carlos became, by reversion, heir to the little kingdom of Navarre, which, nestled among the peaks of the Pyrenees—the Switzerland of the south—had long maintained its mountain nationality against the arms and intrigues both of its Spanish neighbours and of the mightier puissance of France. But Carlos, though a virtuous and estimable prince, was not a favourite with his parents, and, endeavouring to deprive him of the succession, they compelled their unfortunate son to resort to a civil war, which his death, by the ordinary agency of poison, brought to an abrupt close. Carlos bequeathed the crown of Navarre to his sister Blanche; but this arrangement was still at variance with the crooked designs of his parents, and they presented the vacant diadem to their eldest daughter, Elinor, Countess de Foix, whose son, Gaston de Foix, had recently become the son-in-law of the King of France. Not content with robbing Blanche of her inheritance, and disregarding all the tender impulses of paternity, which indeed in that stormy era were rarely allowed to interfere with questions of policy or aggrandisement, the unnatural father determined to place the princess herself in her sister's hands; and despite her entreaties, her remonstrances, and her tears, despatched her under a strong escort to Navarre. The fears which Blanche entertained of the result, and, perhaps, the object of this step, were quickly realized; and she had been but a short time an inmate of the royal castle of Bearn, when poison removed her from

perilous vicinity of the throne, and accomplished the
n and the vengeance of her sister.
uch family tragedies are the ordinary incidents of a
d of barbarism, but were not, at this epoch, charac-
tic of the Spanish nation, which had very early made
nces on the bright and pleasant path of civilization.
y causes had contributed to effect this result ; and
intercourse, no less than the wars, maintained with
Moors—the progress made by these intruders in the
lopment of the arts, which the Spaniards had such
ent opportunities of observing, as well as their
sant forays on the Christian settlements—combined
idle amongst all classes a refined, chivalrous, and
antic spirit. This was evinced alike in the polished
courteous bearing of the Spaniards, in their deeds of
, their high code of honour, and their soul-stirring
strelsy. The Don Quixote of Cervantes is no creation
e poet, except in its exaggeration ; and Spanish cava-
, armed cap-a-pie, and animated by a deep religious
poetic sentiment, really wandered far and wide in
t of adventures, righting the innocent and defending
weak, in the honoured name of their chosen lady-
. On the bloody field or the smaller arena of the
, in the battle or the tournament, they were equally
inguished ; and the Duke de Medina Sidonia and
ce de Leon, Marquis-Duke de Cadiz, were, in the
enth century, no unworthy representatives of the Cid
arlier times.

The four crowns of Spain were united under the sway
Isabella of Castile and her husband Ferdinand ; and
these dominions were added, by conquest and in-
itance, the foreign dependencies of Sardinia, Naples,
ily, and the Balearic Isles. Isabella was the daughter
John II., King of Castile ; and at the tender age of

four years. was left, by the premature death of John, to the guardianship of her brother Henry, who succeeded his father on the Castilian throne. A court tainted by the excesses of a young and profligate king was a very unsuitable sphere for so delicate a plant ; and her mother, a princess distinguished for her wisdom and piety, soon removed Isabella to the obscure castle of Arevalo, where she brought her up in the assiduous practice of virtue and self-denial, attending carefully to her education, and imbuing her infant mind with a fervent zeal for the interests of religion. In her childhood she was betrothed to the unfortunate Don Carlos, son of John of Arragon ; and at a later period, when that prince had been removed by death, her hand was promised by her brother to Alfonso, King of Portugal ; but this contract she refused to complete, on the ground of the advanced years of her venerable lover. Henry then found a younger, but not more welcome suitor, in the Grand Master of Calatrava, an ecclesiastic, released by a papal dispensation from his monastic engagements, and authorized to undertake the happier yoke of matrimony. The king eagerly supported his pretensions, and determined, notwithstanding the undisguised and avowed repugnance of his sister, to effect the union. But the princess was not without friends, nor did the Grand Master lack enemies. "God will not permit this marriage," exclaimed Beatrix de Bobadilla, a faithful adherent of Isabella, "neither will I !" And drawing a dagger from her bosom, she swore that she would stab the odious bridegroom directly he appeared. It is not likely that Isabella would have permitted such an action, even in her own defence ; but the zealous Beatrix had no opportunity of making the attempt. On his way from Almagro to Madrid, where his nuptials were to be solemnized, the Grand Master was suddenly

attacked by a malignant disease, and was ill only four days, when he expired, cursing the hard fortune which snatched him from the world at such a moment.

The death of the Grand Master was followed by a civil war, which elevated Alfonso, the younger brother of Isabella, to the throne, though he was only in his twelfth year ; and for three years he contested the splendid prize with the vacillating Henry. One morning, however, he was found dead in his bed, no doubt destroyed by the usual resource of poison ; and the confederated nobles then offered the supreme authority to Isabella. But the amiable princess, who founded her notions of right on principle, not policy, declined the proffered honour, nobly declaring that she could not lawfully reign during the life of her brother ; and, through her resistance, negotiations were opened with Henry, the rights of all parties definitively settled, and peace restored.

Three new suitors now aspired to the hand of the wise, beautiful, and accomplished Isabella. Of these, two were the brothers, and one the son of a king—namely, Richard Duke of Gloucester, brother of our own Edward the Fourth ; the ill-fated Duke of Guienne, brother of Louis the Eleventh of France ; and the sagacious Don Ferdinand, son of John of Arragon, and brother of her first suitor, the unhappy Don Carlos. The handsome person and polished manners of Ferdinand, allied to her in blood, and endeared by other associations, secured the preference of Isabella, but were not so successful with her intriguing brother Henry, who, as of old, wished to bestow the royal heiress on some creature of his own. Isabella, however, learning his purpose, secretly arranged the marriage with the court of Arragon ; and, under the protection of Admiral Henriquez, escaped from the little town of Madrigal, where Henry had intended to make her pri-

soner, to the friendly and fortified city of Valladolid. Meanwhile the impatient Ferdinand entered Castile in disguise, accompanied by half a dozen attendants, who represented themselves as travelling merchants, while the young prince, dressed as a servant, waited upon them at the various inns where they stopped, and groomed and dressed their mules. In this way they traversed the country, journeying chiefly at night; and at length arrived before the frowning gates of Valladolid. There the prince's adventures were nearly brought to a tragic close; for a sentinel, observing some dark figures steal up the approach, took the way-worn travellers for enemies, and hurled down from the ramparts a huge stone, which, but for a timely spring, would have crushed the royal lover under its weight. But calling out his name, hostility was succeeded by the liveliest demonstrations of joy, and he was admitted into the city, where, in a few days, his marriage with the lovely Princess Isabella was publicly solemnized in the palace of her ancestors, and the presence of nearly two thousand spectators.

The reign of Ferdinand and Isabella was productive of the most important consequences to Spain, to Europe, and to the world; and it was to the presiding influence of Isabella, to her genius, piety, and beneficence, that these effects were in great measure, if not wholly due. Her patronage of Columbus gave to mankind the rich heritage of the New World; and she was ever a steady protector of religion, learning, philosophy, science, and the arts. Her court was a school of virtue, in which the example of her own life was the most beautiful, as well as the most sublime study. She personally superintended the various departments of the public administration, and at the risk of incurring obloquy, supported her minister Ximenes, the illustrious Cardinal, in all his wise, though

unpopular measures, for the renovation of the government and the reform of the laws. The great Captain, Gonsalvo de Cordova, shared her friendship with Ximenes and Columbus; and all too soon learnt, at her death, how much they had owed to her justice, her wisdom, and her generosity.

Happy in her marriage, in her reign, and in the affection and devoted loyalty of her subjects, Isabella was doomed to experience the sorrows of humanity in her children. Her son, the best-loved of her heart, and the hope of Spain, died in his youth; and her favourite daughter, Eleanora of Portugal, quickly followed him to the grave. A darker fate was in store for her daughter Joanna, who, at an early age, married the Archduke Philip of Austria, and had scarcely become a mother, when she manifested symptoms of insanity. The poor Queen was overwhelmed by these successive trials; and a constitution naturally delicate, and worn by care, anxiety, and trouble, left her an easy prey to a fever, which, in October, 1504, attacked her with great virulence, and speedily marked her for its victim. But her great faculties and serene temper remained unshaken; and a few minutes before her death, she turned her mild blue eyes on the sorrowing domestics, who had silently gathered round the bed, and softly murmured—"Do not weep for me, nor waste your time in fruitless prayers for my recovery; but pray rather for the salvation of my soul." Thus closed the useful and blameless life of the good Queen Isabella.

XIV.

THE DISCOVERY OF AMERICA.

THE three great divisions of the ancient world were each named from a woman—Europe, from Europa, daughter of Agenor, King of Phœnicia ; Asia, from Asia, the wife of Prometheus ; and Libya, the modern Africa, from a native heroine of that name. It was destined that the munificence and enterprise of another woman—Isabella of Castile—should be mainly instrumental in the discovery of the fourth and remaining continent.

Christopher Columbus, an obscure Italian mariner, was the pilot of mankind to this new region. He was born in the famous city of Genoa, in 1435, and was the son of Dominico Colombo, who, with his wife Susanna, earned a precarious livelihood by combing wool. Christopher early manifested an unconquerable predilection for a nautical life, and commenced his career, like our own Drake, as a cabin boy, at the susceptible age of fourteen. Engaging in numerous warlike expeditions, he signalized his courage in a remarkable manner ; and on one occasion he attempted, though with what success is unknown, to cut out a galley from the fortified harbour of Tunis—in those days the most perilous feat of maritime warfare. But his occasional wanderings to the mouth of the unknown ocean, beyond the narrow outlet of the Mediterranean, inspired his mind with other and more sublime ideas, and he was seized with an irresistible impulse to traverse that mighty expanse of waters, which had so long formed the boundary of the world. A deep-rooted conviction of the sphericity of the earth led him to believe

that the wild waves of the Atlantic washed, at no immeasurable distance, the golden shores of western Asia ; and in every fragment of wood that was picked up at sea, every floating *débris*, every law of the currents and the winds, he beheld a new witness to the truth of his theory. Himself without funds to fit out an expedition of discovery, he submitted his views to the King of Portugal, hoping, by a prospect so tempting, to secure his assistance and protection ; but, after repeated efforts, he completely failed in this design, and secretly quitting Lisbon, had recourse to the more potent sovereigns of Spain. Fourteen years were consumed in fruitless attendance and solicitation in the gorgeous palace of Ferdinand, and at length, heart-broken by continual disappointments, Columbus was about to try his fortune in England, when the prior of a Franciscan convent, at which he applied for a night's shelter, induced him to make another trial of royal favour, recommended him to some influential friends at court, and procured him an early introduction to the good Queen Isabella. That great princess was interested, if not convinced, by his glowing statements ; she instantly became his friend and protectress ; and finally, after encountering innumerable obstacles, which only such a woman and such a man could have overcome, succeeded in accomplishing the great wish of his heart. An expedition was ordered to be fitted out at the joint expense of the two sovereigns ; and Columbus was appointed its commander.

It was in his fifty-fourth year, in the autumn of 1492, that Columbus set sail on his memorable voyage with a tiny squadron of three vessels, only one of which was decked. Even in the present day it would be deemed a perilous and most hazardous enterprise to attempt the passage of the Atlantic in an open galley, scarcely raised

above the level of the water ; but it should seem, from the event, that an overruling Providence was especially watchful of these frail barks ; and from the moment of their leaving the Canaries, the last frowning gate of the known world, they encountered only light breezes, placid waves, and summer showers. Even these, however, presented themselves to the superstitious minds of the sailors as evil and inauspicious portents, eminently adverse to their project ; the benignant airs of the Tropics appeared to be unvarying winds, inclined eternally to one point, and consequently of a character to prevent their return ; the dead calm of the equator was a motionless pool, in which their clogged barks were fixed for ever ; the vast, wide, unbroken waters were without end, and without bound. They shuddered at the unaccountable variation of the compass ; they no longer took comfort in floating branches of trees, or hailed with delight, as from another Ark, the numerous flocks of birds which sailed majestically past—stray messengers from an unseen world. Their ships were buffeting unknown billows ; night mantled the sky and the sea, and darkness was in every mind, when one watchful eye, ever scanning the horizon, discerned a light. He pointed it out to the despairing crew—announced it as the beacon of the long-sought and anxiously-expected shore ; and morning realized his anticipations, revealing, with its first rays, the verdant slopes of the Antilles.

The inhabitants of the island, untutored children of nature, were already gathered on the beach, rapt in wonder at the appearance and the movements of the ships, which they considered to be living monsters risen from the deep ; and the docile sails, which, as the gallant barks tacked to and fro, were now closely furled, now spread to the wind, they conceived to be wings, with

which the huge animals could either skim over the waves or rise in the air. But their amazement was increased when boats were lowered from the stern, and they saw men, or rather gods, as they simply thought, lightly spring into them, and pull for the shore. As the strangers approached, they retreated in dismay ; but the kind aspect and noble mien of Columbus, with his friendly and encouraging gestures, dispelled or moderated their fears. They cautiously advanced nearer, gradually drew closer and closer, came up to him, and fell at his feet.

There was only one female in the throng, a young girl, whose beautiful form had never known the restraint of clothing. Her complexion, like that of her companions, was tawny ; her features were pleasing, and though they were slightly disfigured by paint, and shaded by long straight tresses of coarse black hair, the effect of her appearance, if fantastic, was on the whole agreeable. She was won by the kindness and generosity of Columbus, who presented her with some glass beads and hawk's-bells, inestimable treasures in the eyes of a savage beauty ; and from this moment her simple heart was wholly devoted to the fascinating strangers.

At another island the natives, terrified at the sight of such mysterious beings, fled at their approach. They were pursued by the sailors, who succeeded in capturing a young woman, the wife of a resident in the nearest village. She was of a comparatively fair complexion, though, clothing being superfluous in this warm climate, neither her face nor her form possessed any protection from the sun, and her only attempt at adornment was a small gold pendant hanging from her nose. Columbus, as in the former case, presented her with some beads and trinkets, and sent her away rejoicing. She proved an instrument for establishing peace and amity with the

other inhabitants of the island, who now flocked to the shore in eager crowds, bringing with them, as a pledge of good will, the husband of the liberated captive, who was profuse in his manifestations of gratitude to the generous Columbus.

The great navigator was especially observant of the social condition and position of the sex in this simple community. "In all these islands," he remarks, "it seems to me that the men have but one wife, though the king or chieftain is allowed twenty. Most of the work devolves on the women ; but I have been unable to ascertain whether they are capable of inheriting property, but rather think not." The sovereign authority, as in all primitive communities, was hereditary, descending, however, in the female line, which was considered to insure, beyond all doubt, the consanguinity of the succession. The women were universally gentle, tractable, tender, and affectionate—prompt to love, and devoted in their attachments. Las Casas compares their innocence with that of Eve, before the forbidden fruit, maturing and corrupting her mind, had taught her to blush at the modest simplicity of nature. He might have extended the parallel to their country, which possessed attractions worthy of Paradise ; and the smiling valleys, clothed in all the glory of tropical vegetation, surrounded by verdant undulating heights, crowned with woods, the trees laden with every variety of fruit, and overshadowing crystal streams, margined by banks of odorous flowers, appeared to their European visitors no inapt representation of Eden.

This picture was soon to be marred and wasted by European cruelty : the valleys, so pleasant, so fruitful, so peaceful, were devastated ; the limpid streams ran with blood ; the once happy and trustful natives were subjugated, oppressed, butchered, and enslaved.

Columbus, sent in chains to Spain, could no longer interpose between the Spaniards and their victims ; and the miserable Indians now beheld the beings whom they had worshipped as gods, literally transformed into demons. The fate of Anacaona affords a melancholy example of their ferocity and villany. This noble daughter of nature, beautiful alike in person and disposition, was the sister of a powerful cacique, ruling over a fertile and populous district in the heart of San Domingo ; and at his death, she succeeded to the government, and became the happy mistress of a loyal people. The esteem in which she was held in the island is intimated by her name, which may be interpreted as "The Golden Flower;" and it would appear, from the concurring testimony of several Spanish writers, that she was endowed with such eminent natural gifts, that they almost compensated for her want of education, imparting a polish to her manners, a dignity to her mien, and a delicate refinement to her mind, which might well recall the truthful words of Gray—

" Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

She was a skilled musician, as far as the rude instruments of the wilderness would permit, and also a poetess, having composed, with little effort, some of the finest of the wild legendary ballads which formed the favourite chants of the natives, and which they sang together in the national dances, on every occasion of rejoicing. Her husband, Caonaba, one of the most warlike of the independent Carib chiefs, had been made prisoner by the Spaniards, and carried as a slave to Europe ; but this, though for a time overwhelming her with grief, did not alienate her from the white men, as she knew that Caonaba had provoked their enmity, and so regarded his captivity as an

ordinary result of war. She even consented to give the hand of her daughter to one of the stranger race, Hernando de Guavara, a noble cavalier, who had become desperately enamoured of the young Indian belle, but who, after their union, treated her with characteristic perfidy and cruelty. Still, Anacaona, from policy, if not from feeling, continued to maintain friendly relations with the Spaniards, though they every day subjected her subjects or herself to some fresh outrage. At length she received an intimation from Ovando, the Spanish governor, that he was about to pay her a visit, and, anxious to conciliate his good will, she exhausted her scanty resources in preparing for his reception. He was accompanied by a powerful force, both of cavalry and infantry ; but the confiding Anacaona, relying on her own rectitude, had no suspicion of treachery, and gave them an eager welcome. Ovando was lodged in the best hut in the village ; his troops were hospitably entertained ; and the simple Indians, under the direction of their Queen, sought to please and divert them with their national games and dances. Ovando, apparently in high good humour, proposed to make a return for these civilities, by exhibiting the European spectacle of a tournament ; and on the appointed day, Anacaona and the neighbouring caciques, eighty in number, were invited to his house, fronting the great square of the village, for the purpose of viewing the pageant, while a concourse of naked unarmed Indians surrounded the lists below. At the moment when all were expecting the tournament to commence, Ovando gave the signal for a general massacre. The caciques, after being cruelly tortured, were tied to posts, and the house being set on fire, they perished in the flames ; the other spectators were put to the sword, without distinction of sex or age ; and Anacaona was


ignominiously loaded with fetters, conveyed to the Fortress of Isabella, and there adjudged to death, terminating her unhappy career on the gibbet.

The aboriginal nations of the great continent of America, discovered by later voyagers, were found to exhibit a degree of civilization and social advancement quite unknown among the natives of the islands. On a close view, however, they really appear to have been only raised from barbarism by their superior opulence, and not by the more sterling influence of moral refinement. Both the Peruvians and Mexicans indulged in the horrid practice of cannibalism, and stained the altars of their gods with human sacrifices. The Peruvians worshipped the sun and moon, represented by grotesque figures, enshrined in temples of burnished gold ; but, in the dark myths of their religious allegories, they veiled, as it were, not a few ancient traditions strongly corroborative of various statements of the Scriptures. What was scarcely a less singular coincidence, one of their sacerdotal institutions was a maiden sisterhood, called "the Virgins of the Sun," in every respect exactly resembling the Vestals of ancient Rome. The most beautiful maidens were selected for the office at a tender age, and, after a solemn consecration, were immured in a convent, or college, where they were placed under the charge of venerable matrons, who carefully instructed them in their religious duties. Their principal task was to watch over the sacred fire, which was kept perpetually burning before the golden altar of the sun; and, at other times, they were required, as a part of their ministerial functions, to weave and embroider hangings for the temple. They were entirely secluded from the world, not being permitted even to communicate with their family, and their vows irrevocably bound them to a life of celibacy ; an infringement

of which, if discovered, entailed, as in pagan Rome, the awful penalty of interment alive. The prohibition, however, did not shut out royalty, and the Inca vestals were allowed to contract marriage with the King, who generally selected his wives from the holy sisterhood.

Polygamy was confined to the King and nobles ; and the humbler classes, with few exceptions, possessed only one wife. The mode of espousal was as simple as unique. On a certain anniversary, the young men who had reached their twenty-fourth, and the maidens who had attained their eighteenth year, all assembled together in the public square of their native village, and there severally plighted themselves to each other, the only condition of union required being the consent of the bride and the sanction of the father. The wedding was solemnized by a sumptuous banquet, at which the friends of both families attended ; and as all were married on the same day, the rejoicings, spread over the whole country, and shared by every individual, had a really universal character, and constituted a great national festival.

The customs of the potent Mexican community were entirely different from those of the Incas. In the first place, their religion, though both idolatrous and debasing, retained in its rites isolated traces of an original pure source, gleaming through the odious practices of superstition. Under the veil of a gloomy mythology, the Aztec still worshipped one supreme and overruling Lord, and, like the Incas, preserved imperfect and obscure traditions of the incidents of Genesis. But their most singular religious rite was a baptismal ceremony, in which they sprinkled water on the lips and bosom of infants, at the same time beseeching " the Lord to suffer the consecrated drops to efface the sin entailed on the child before the



foundation of the world, so that it might be born again." At other times, infants were solemnly immolated before the image of the God of War, who was also propitiated by the sacrifice of captives taken in battle ; but the beneficent God of the Air, who presided over the seasons, and was the especial protector of the husbandman, received only offerings of animals, fruits, and flowers.

As children, the daughters of Mexico were reared in strict subjection to their parents ; but the parental discipline, if rigorous in youth, relaxed as they grew older, and the rising woman assumed a higher and more independent position. Though their present representatives can lay no claim to beauty, the Aztec damsels of ancient times were not deficient in personal attractions, and their raven tresses and lustrous eyes won eager admirers. Marriage was contracted at an early age, and was a religious ceremony, held in universal reverence, insomuch that, once solemnized, it could only be dissolved by a legal tribunal, invested exclusively with this important jurisdiction. The position of woman, however, on the whole, was not an enviable one, though she appears to have been at liberty to indulge at will in social intercourse, was admitted to a share in the public festivals, and even enjoyed some degree of protection from the law.

But the empires and the population of ancient America have now passed away : tracts once verdant with pasture or teeming with produce, are overgrown with dense forest or immersed in swamp ; ruined cities, lying in crumbled fragments, are the only vestiges of a vanished greatness —ripples on the rocks of time ; and the few straggling wanderers who flit through the wilds are like phantom representatives of a dead creation. What must have been the past revolutions of human society, when, within a

period so recent—within the narrow limits of two centuries and a half, the inhabitants of an entire hemisphere have disappeared !

XV.

THE TUDOR PERIOD.

THE period to which I have applied the designation of Tudor, as the most appropriate and descriptive, comprises a circle of ages fruitful of importance to the world, and eminently marked by the influence of woman. Suddenly the nations that sat in darkness saw a great light ; religion, so long buried, not under a bushel, but a mountain, burst from its prison ; learning came forth from its grave ; the lost arts were recovered ; Caxton roughly shaped out the mighty engine of the press ; and the mariner's compass, that charmed and precious gift, guided Columbus to a new world.

Yet, in some respects, this splendid era might still be inscribed on the scroll of the dark ages. Civilization, born again, was yet in its cradle ; and neither the barbaric magnificence of the Field of the Cloth of Gold, nor the magic creations of Michael Angelo, which revived the glories of ancient Greece, can shut our eyes to the horrors of the bloody field of Pavia, the martyr-fires of Smithfield, or the awful sack of Rome. If, on the one hand, the light of Scriptural truth was once more kindled and displayed, on the other, bigotry, intolerance, ignorance, and superstition, never appeared in greater strength, in higher places, or in more odious colours. Nor were the standard of morals, and general customs and usages of society, much,

anything, in advance of those prevailing in the most enlightened times. The celebrated Marguerite de Valois, queen of Navarre, a virtuous and estimable princess, free from the vices, but deeply tinctured with the levity of her temporaries, has left us, in the *Heptameron*, a dreadful picture of the universal profligacy and corruption. In their long subjection to a cruel domination, women had worn off their dignity, their delicacy, their virtue, and even their modesty. Amours and scandal were the secret vice, chess, card-playing, betting, the public amusements of rank ; and women of the humbler class followed the same pursuits, in a more open but not more vulgar manner. Their excesses were punished by their husbands in a very summary way, without any fear of magisterial retribution ; and, in fact, a too indulgent lord ran some risk of being carried round his native town in a blanket, a public spectacle, while a wife notoriously given to idling was by law condemned to the ducking-stool.

The mode of living followed by women was in keeping with the coarseness of their lives ; and we find young, but delicate maids of honour, in the orderly household of Catherine of Arragon, making their breakfast off chineese beef and salmon, washed down with gallons of ale. Every partook of this substantial fare at the early hour of eight, dined at eleven, supped at six, and retired to their private couches at seven. Religion was only used as a cloak or an excitement ; and pilgrimages to the shrine of some favourite or popular saint, undertaken at considerable expense, and to the utter neglect of the various duties of home, usually served but to cover an assignation, a flirtation, or an intrigue. The numerous holidays of the Roman calendar, occurring every week, were commemorated by public dances, spectacles, and merry-makings, which afforded occasion for similar pro-

ceedings ; and it would be difficult, as well as painful, to describe the excesses committed in England on May-day, and in France, Germany, and Italy, at the annual festivities of the vintage.

Much the same standard of morals existed in Scotland, though, from the disturbed state of society, it was exhibited in a different form ; and the same lips which to-day mumbled the jargon of superstition, to-morrow curled with the sneer of the sceptic. The gay and chivalrous James IV., who closed his brief career on the field of Flodden, was in the habit of retiring, in his graver moments, to the castle of Stirling, to indulge in religious meditation ; and on one of these occasions he received from the poet Dunbar, an ordained priest, and a chaplain of the court, a poetic remonstrance on his protracted absence, in the shape of a parody on the Litany of the Church. Dunbar exults at the endless pleasures of Edinburgh life—

“ We that are here in Heaven’s glory,
To you that are in Purgatory,
Commend us on our hearty wise—
I mean we folk of Paradise
In Edinburgh, with all merriness,
To you in Stirling, in distress,
Where neither pleasure nor delight is :
For pity this epistle wrytis.”

So little reverence, indeed, did the sturdy Scots lords show for some of the most ordinary forms of religion, that it was not till they came under the kindly influence of Queen Margaret, the lovely consort of Malcolm the Third, that they had adopted the practice of saying grace at dinner ; and to reconcile them to so great an innovation, Margaret was obliged to introduce also the custom of presenting each guest with a cup of wine, directly after

grace ; whence arose the term of "the grace-cup." Raids and forays on the lands and beeves of hostile neighbours, as well as of more distant foes, gave a freebooting character to many of the lesser nobility ; and in their marauding expeditions, woman was as often the prey of open violence, as of treachery and fraud. Nor were the higher ranks altogether free from a similar stain. The Dowager Lady Gracius, sister of the great Earl of Angus, was burnt alive on Calton Hill, by James V., on a false charge of treason ; and by a refinement of cruelty, her second husband, a Campbell, whom she had but recently married, was compelled to attend, though he would not witness her execution, and in endeavouring to escape from the spot, fell from a lofty wall, and was dashed to pieces.

Poisoning became a practice universally in vogue, particularly among the higher classes, insomuch that the death of persons of rank, and even of sovereigns, was generally attributed to poison ; and a street in Paris still marks, by its accursed name, the residence of the most fashionable dispenser of deadly drugs. Superstition had its votaries in every class : astrology, as in the days of Semiramis, was still a royal science ; the great Queen Elizabeth was a believer in Doctor Dee ; and Louise of Savoy, a princess of equal discernment, though a generation earlier in point of time, actually appointed the celebrated Cornelius Agrippa to a post in her household, that she might have the advantage of referring daily to his astrological observations.

The very accomplishments of women were perverted to some unworthy or unbecoming purpose. Princess Mary of England, who afterwards ascended the throne, several times danced before the court, in a masquerade dress, as a mummer ; and at a later period, in the polished kingdom of France, Marie de Medicis publicly took part in a

ballet, at the wedding of one of the court dames. Still, dancing was undoubtedly a very felicitous addition to the list of female accomplishments ; and music, so long proscribed or forgotten, was cultivated with equal assiduity. Virginals was the favourite instrument with young ladies of quality, from which circumstance it derived its name ; and women of humbler rank, the city miss—or the professed musician, if of the softer sex—played the cithern. But the new generation of ladies were not satisfied with these little arts—useful, indeed, as accessories to beauty, as artificial graces, but giving no elevation to the mind. As learning revived, women, toiling up the Heliconian heights, sought to reach the sealed fountain of Hippocrene ; languages, so long lost that they were called dead—a designation they still retain—became a popular branch of education ; and young ladies, instead of pricking their fingers over tapestry or embroidered standards, spent their leisure in the acquisition of Latin and Greek, which they learnt to read with ease, and to write with elegance and fluency.

The capture of Constantinople by the Turks drove from the schools of the imperial city the last guardians of learning, diffusing over Europe a number of erudite Greeks, who, fixing their residence in the principal cities, threw open the rich treasures of knowledge to all comers. Books, hitherto confined to manuscript, the work of careless or ignorant transcribers, and found only in monasteries, or in the cabinets of nobles, were now produced by the printing-press, by which, though it was still in its infancy, they were prodigiously multiplied and cheapened. It was no longer considered disgraceful to know how to read and write ; but, on the contrary, the scholar became an object of general respect, and fair ladies held him in as much esteem as the mailed warrior or the belted

knight. Sculpture, architecture, painting, awoke, as if at an archangel's trump, from their sleep of a thousand years, and Italy once more poured forth her artists to reclaim, humanize, and enlighten the world.

But the one great effect of the revival of learning, its most triumphant achievement, was the translation—I might almost say the recovery—of the Bible. That Book of books had for ages been hermetically closed by the seal of a dead language, not only to the laity but also to the priesthood, and had become as obsolete as the laws of Lycurgus. The Greeks saved the precious volume from the wreck of the Eastern empire, and, on their dispersion, reproduced it in Europe. In 1516 a critical edition of the New Testament was published at Bâle, by the learned Erasmus; and the pious Bishop of Meaux, in France, was encouraged by Marguerite de Valois, sister of Francis the First, to translate a large portion of the Scriptures into French, which tended greatly to disseminate purer and more enlarged views of religion in that country. Ultimately an English translation of the whole Bible was printed and presented to Henry the Eighth, who, without consulting priest or synod, sanctioned its dissemination throughout his dominions.

Thus, under the direction of an overruling Providence, the advance of the Turks in the East, which had threatened the subversion of Christendom, contributed powerfully to restore, diffuse, and permanently establish the true principles of Christianity as they are distinctly laid down in the Word of the Most High. The time was very opportune for this mighty, this divine movement, and many incidents combined to give it peculiar force. All classes had become disgusted at the scandalous lives and undisguised vices of the clergy, and were thus prepared, by the depravity of their existing pastors, for the promulgation

of what might really be called a new religion. At one moment Europe was scandalized by the spectacle of a Pope, such as Alexander VI., administering poison to his guests at a convivial banquet ; at another, by the exploits of the warlike Julius, who, at the mature age of eighty, doffed the tiara for the helmet, and actually fought in the field against a Christian army ; or, again, by the unheard-of scandal of two contemporaneous and rival Popes, dividing Europe and the Church, and publicly anathematizing each other. Meanwhile the Lord of Heaven and Earth, the Dispenser and Source of all Good, was entirely lost sight of, and a rabble of doubtful or worthless saints intercepted the worship of his creatures. So obvious, indeed, was the necessity of reform, both in a spiritual and temporal point of view, that many pious prelates and monks were amongst its foremost advocates, and the infallibility of the Church was openly denied by its own consecrated ministers.

This was the moment predestined by Heaven, so long provoked and outraged, for the appearance, in the humble guise of a miner's son, of a missionary of its will, raised up to inaugurate and direct the blessed work of the Reformation. Two obscure students were walking through the streets of Erfurt, jesting and laughing, though dark clouds, big with impending tempest, had gathered overhead, when suddenly a flash of lightning darted from the sky, and struck one of the young men dead on the spot. The other, terrified and bewildered, ejaculated a vow to St. Anne, that if he should be preserved, he would dedicate the remainder of his life to the service of the Church, by entering a monastery, and devoting himself to the duties of religion. In this awful manner was Martin Luther called to his solemn and holy mission.

Shut in the cell of the anchorite, cut off from man, and from earthly pursuits, he was now ever looking into the dark world of his own mind, peering into every cavity, every nook and recess, to discover and pluck up the smallest grains of mortal feeling, innate error, and human weakness. Yet the more he examined himself—the more earnestly he sought for purity and elevation, the more was he persuaded, in this bitter commune with his heart, of his irreclaimable depravity. Fasting, prayer, the scourge, succeeded by the shirt of coarse hair, drawn over the still bleeding stripes, failed to remove from his mind the burden of imaginary guilt. “Oh, my sins! my sins! my sins!” he cried, in the frantic agony of his despair. His confessor, the superior of the monastery, bade him be comforted, as the sins of which he accused himself did not deserve the name, but, on the contrary, served only to mark his eminent purity and virtue. But the great soul of Luther could find no consolation in such feeble doctrine. He continued to bury himself in the solitude of his cell, to fast, to pray, to repair at midnight to the monastery chapel, barefooted and but half-clad, sinking with exhaustion and sickness, to look for something he could not find—expiation, redemption. It came, at last.

A profligate Dominican monk had been authorized by Leo the Tenth, the reigning Pontiff, to open a market in Germany for the sale of indulgences, the proceeds of which were to be devoted to the completion of the basilica of St. Peter, at Rome; and, stimulated by a corrupt zeal, he no doubt greatly exceeded his instructions in the transaction. In company with other monks, he hawked his holy wares through the streets of Wittemberg, publicly enumerating the long catalogue of sins which they would efface, and adding, from the store of

his foul imagination, a list of crimes unknown to the great mass of people, till his auditors were overwhelmed with horror. "All this is expiated," he cried, in every thoroughfare, "the moment your money chinks in the Pope's chest."

Luther was astounded by a declaration so startling and so wicked, and versed, like Moses, in all the learning of the day, sought to controvert it by the musty theology of the fathers. But, as he proceeded, he felt the necessity of taking higher ground, of using more potent arguments, and appealing to more indisputable authority; and, under a divine impulse, he turned to the Bible. Here, indeed, he found the great corner-stone of Christianity, and once more planted the cross on the Rock of Ages.

The thunder of Luther's eloquence soon pealed over Germany: it shook the massive foundations of the Vatican; it resounded through Europe. The reformer, by some pronounced a heretic, by others an apostle, was cited by the Emperor Charles the Fifth to appear before the Diet at Worms; and, protected by a safe-conduct, boldly presented himself in court, confronted his accusers and the advocate of Rome, and indignantly refused to retract his opinions. All Christendom was anxiously awaiting the issue, when Luther, who alone had preserved his serenity, mysteriously disappeared. On his way home from Worms, he was suddenly surrounded by a body of horse; a disguise was hastily thrown over him; and he was carried off, a willing captive, to the strong castle of Wartburg, belonging to his stanch protector, the Elector of Saxony, where he remained in concealment, and in safety, till the dangers which threatened him had passed.

But though his retreat was unknown, his tracts and letters continued to be written, and, by means of the

press, were promulgated through every state of Germany ; and at length his tenets became so firmly established, and his disciples so numerous and powerful, that he was able to re-appear in public without danger. His first step was to throw open the doors of the convents, which had closed, like the tomb, on numbers of wretched women, condemned to the gloom, without the rest of the grave. But their very emancipation was attended, in the first instance, with considerable hardship and privation, as the revenues of the various convents were appropriated by the state, and no provision made for the liberated nuns. Luther received many poor girls into his own house, giving them a share of his humble meals, and denying himself, to administer to their support. His kindness to these destitute and friendless women, thrown helpless on a cruel and unknown world, without any means of procuring a subsistence, marks the simplicity and genuine warmth of his nature. He exerted himself among his friends, personally and by letter, to obtain them employment, and in some cases gave money from his own small means, either to establish them in suitable callings, or to enable them to reach a place where they were likely to obtain a livelihood. But where thousands of women of all ages were suddenly cast on society, the distress was, of course, too great and too general to be relieved by an individual, himself a poor and humble man ; and Luther's efforts produced but little effect. Still he continued to afford an asylum and a home to all who sought his door, and not a few owed to him their happy settlement in life. Among these fair refugees was Catherine de Bora, described by some as a beautiful, by others as a plain woman ; but for whom Luther could procure no eligible employment. Hearing that she had formerly had a lover, who professed to be much attached to her, he

addressed him a letter, urging him to marry the young lady, as she was now free, and endowed with every quality to make him happy. The recreant Lothario, however, declined the proffered boon, and, considering how to dispose of the maiden, Luther came to the resolution of espousing her himself. Catherine was now in her twenty-fifth year, was of noble birth, and possessed an amiable disposition. Her character, on which no one has ever ventured to cast a slur, is thus drawn by her husband, in a letter to Stifel, a year after their marriage : —“ Catherine, my dear rib, salutes you. She is quite well, thank God : gentle, obedient, and kind in all things, far beyond my hopes. I would not exchange my poverty with her, for all the riches of Cræsus without her.”

Who can tell how much the ardent temperament of Luther was influenced by this estimable woman ? She was just the kindly monitor, the guardian angel, that his bold spirit required ; now placing a curb on his fierce zeal, now cheering and sustaining him on his mighty course. It is pleasant to trace a woman's hand in this second dispensation of heavenly truth and knowledge. It reminds us of the first eras of Christianity—of the blessed Magdalen and Martha ; and we forget, for a moment, the martyr-stakes of Nero, and the rack of Domitian. Would that we could pass by also the atrocities of our English Mary !

Luther's income was small, and to support the expense of his household, he followed the example of St. Paul, in conjoining with the duties of the ministry the humble occupation, not of a tent-maker, but of a turner. But often the day's wages which he so diligently and laboriously earned, instead of being expended on himself or his family, were generously bestowed in charity, and he gladly stinted himself, to give to others. Catherine, it is

evident, never complained ; and her patient docile conduct inspired Luther with a noble opinion of the sex. "The utmost blessing that God can confer on man," he writes, "is the possession of a good and pious wife, with whom he may live in peace and tranquillity, to whom he may confide his whole possessions, even his life and welfare." And again—"When I was at school, my hostess at Eisenach had a good saying, 'There is nothing on earth,' said the worthy dame, 'so sweet and consoling as the love of woman.'"

Luther, as if in a prophetic spirit, often mournfully wished that Catherine might die before him, fearing to leave her unfriended in the world. But she was unfortunately destined to be the survivor ; and, to the shame of Germany and of Christendom, the wife of the great reformer was, in her declining years, reduced to beg her bread.

Such a great change as that brought about by Luther could not be effected without in some measure deranging society, and so producing a small measure of evil, as a sort of set-off to the good. The revival of learning had paved the way for the promulgation of the Scriptures : both had combined to break the iron despotism of the Church ; but, disabused as to what they had long regarded as most venerable, men began to look with coldness, if not repugnance, on other institutions still upheld by the law. The same rights of seignory which had given rise to the revolt of the English Wat Tyler, and to the Jacquerie in France, now provoked the memorable Peasants' War in Germany, and set the whole empire in flames. The insurrection, which had its origin in Helgovia, assumed its most formidable phase in Thuringia, where it was headed by a fanatic named Munzer, a reprobate of the worst class. Polygamy was one of the doctrines of this impostor ; and

a band of poor ignorant women, deluded by his specious orations, accepted the creed, and marched in arms with his rabble host, under a standard of their own. The insurgents committed the greatest excesses, destroyed a number of convents and castles, and made prisoners of their inmates. Many ladies of rank, wives and daughters of nobles, fell into their hands, and were infamously treated. At last they were rescued by Duke Antony of Lorraine, who killed nearly thirty thousand peasants, in three pitched battles; and the revolt, after partially regaining ground, was finally suppressed by the gallant Frundsberg, who, unwilling to stain his sword with the blood of his countrymen, suffered the rebels to disperse in the night, without striking a blow.

The horrors of insurrection and war were not confined to Germany, but desolated Italy, and almost ruined France. Louise of Savoy, Duchess d'Angoulême, exercised a paramount influence on the fortunes of the latter kingdom. She was the daughter of Philip, sovereign Duke of Savoy, and in her fifteenth year married Charles d'Angoulême, a prince of the royal house of Bourbon. With extraordinary personal beauty, Louise, while yet a child, combined the most rare intellectual gifts, and was mistress of all the accomplishments of the age. Her fine capacity was equal to any effort; and the impression produced by her majestic deportment was such, that even her gay son Francis, after he had ascended the throne, and become the most powerful monarch of Europe, never addressed her till he had doffed his cap. But her eminent talents, apparent in all her actions, were almost marred by the love of intrigue and Machiavellian policy too often associated, by perverse fate, with the fervid genius of Italy. Her still, placid bosom, as it appeared to the eye, was a well of furious passions, which at times burst forth with

irresistible vehemence, overwhelming herself and all whom she approached in a common ruin. At such moments, no consideration had power to restrain her, and she sacrificed every human feeling to the object in view.

The illness of Louis the Twelfth, at a time when her son Francis was presumptive heir to the crown, inspired Louise with premature expectations of sovereign power, and the Queen-consort, Anne of Bretagne, looking forward to a similar event, hastened to remove from France all her treasures and valuables, in dread of the moment when her enemy Louise should wield the supreme authority. But the Duchess d'Angoulême gave secret instructions to the Governor of Anjou, Marshal de Gié, who was devoted to her interest, to intercept the spoil, and to seize Anne herself if she should attempt to cross the frontier. The Queen had no intention of leaving the kingdom, and remained at the bedside of her husband, mournfully awaiting his dissolution ; but her rich effects were all forwarded, and, as arranged by Louise, stopped on the way by Marshal de Gié. At this juncture the King recovered ; Louise, from being the centre of all eyes, sank again into a simple duchess, and Anne was once more the ascendant star. The unfortunate Marshal trembled, and not without cause, for in a few days he was called on to explain his conduct, and brought to trial for treason. He pleaded in his defence that he had acted under the orders of Louise ; but the latter, confronting him in court, boldly denied the fact, eliciting from her victim a touching retort, almost in the words used by Wolsey, under circumstances of a parallel character—"Had I but served God, madam, as I have served you, I should not have a great account to render at the hour of death."

But the most momentous incident in the life of Louise was her fatal attachment to Bourbon, which, in its results,

not only entailed a series of calamities on her family and on France, but operated in the most baneful manner on other nations. Charles de Bourbon, the famous Constable, originally a poor cadet of the royal house, had, in right of his wife, Suzanne, succeeded to the vast inheritance of Bourbon-Beaujeu, which rendered him the wealthiest prince in Europe. His handsome person and versatile talents, his noble qualities, his career as a soldier and deeds of chivalrous daring, marking alike the cavalier and the commander, excited universal admiration, while his affability and munificence especially endeared him to the common people. Left a widower in the prime of life, he soon attracted the attention of Louise, who, after some ineffectual coquetting, openly made overtures for his hand. Bourbon, with more pride than policy, as openly declined the alliance, an indignity which any lady must have felt severely, but which excited the deepest resentment in the stormy heart of Louise. All her thoughts were now given to revenge, for which she found a ready instrument in the Chancellor Dupratt, a bitter enemy of Bourbon, and servile in his devotion to herself. At his suggestion, the Duchess, as niece of the deceased Duke Pierre de Bourbon, father-in-law of the Constable, claimed the immense estates of the latter; her cause was espoused by the King, and an obsequious court of law, of which Dupratt was president, pronounced an unjust verdict in her favour. Meanwhile Bourbon was held up to the derision and contempt of the courtiers. His high spirit was chafed by a thousand slights, and everything was done to wound, annoy, and humiliate him. At this moment, when all the worst passions of his heart were aroused, he was visited by an emissary from Charles the Fifth, inviting him, in the joint names of the Emperor and Henry the Eighth of England, to enter into a secret

treaty, in which they formally engaged to secure him the crown of France. Actuated both by ambition and revenge, he too readily yielded to this temptation ; after a succession of romantic adventures, he contrived to pass the frontier, reached the imperial army under the Marquis de Pescara, and soon re-appeared in the naked borders of France, at Marseilles, as an enemy and an invader.

Louise, when too late, regretted the precipitancy, if not the injustice of her conduct ; and now sought, by her wise counsels, to temper the fury and impetuosity of Francis. Marseilles being relieved, the imperial forces retreated into Italy, whither they were followed by a French army, under the Admiral Bonnivet, a gallant but rash commander, who, pushing forward to the relief of Milan, came up with Bourbon at the heights of Sessia, and there engaged in a desperate and bloody conflict. Bonnivet, who had too surely counted on victory, was completely defeated, and obliged to seek safety in flight, leaving the flower of his splendid army dead on the field. Among those who fell was the Chevalier Bayard, the mirror of French chivalry, whose character has been summed up in those epigrammatic words—*sans peur et sans reproche*. The gallant knight received a mortal wound, while seeking to cover the retreat, or rather the flight, of his countrymen, and was instantly lifted to the ground by his esquire, while his blanched lips articulated—“*Jésu, mon Dieu, je suis mort.*” Desiring his sword to be planted upright in the ground, he turned his closing eyes on the hilt, which was shaped like a cross, and was faintly murmuring a prayer, when Bourbon, in hot pursuit of the flying enemy, galloped up. Recognising Bayard, his ancient friend and comrade, he was overwhelmed with sorrow, and burst into tears. “Keep those tears, Charles de Bourbon, for yourself and for

France," said the dying soldier : "What is the wound you have given me, compared with that you have inflicted on your country !" And with this mournful reproach, the good knight fell back, and in a few minutes was a corpse.

But worse disasters for France, already so weakened and humbled, were soon to follow. Despite the urgent entreaties of Louise, Francis crossed the fatal boundary of the Alps at the head of another army, to attempt the retrieval of his shattered fortunes ; and a sanguinary engagement at Pavia terminated in his total overthrow, and beheld him disabled on the field, wounded, and a prisoner. A few words conveyed the dismal tidings to his mother : "Madam, all is lost but honour."

Louise now reaped the bitter fruits of her ungovernable and unscrupulous passions. She had deprived Bourbon, an innocent and deeply-wronged man, whom she had professed to love, of his birthright and name, driven him into exile, and provoked him, after so often hazarding his life in the service of his country, to fight in the ranks of her hereditary enemies. A signal retribution had overtaken her, and the man she had thought to crush as a moth or a worm, was the instrument of its infliction : France and her young King were both prostrate at the feet of Bourbon.

The sole comfort of Louise in this hour of anguish was her daughter, the beautiful and famous Marguerite de Valois, Duchess d'Alençon, and afterwards the Queen of Navarre. The mother and daughter were not more tenderly attached to each other than to Francis, who, on his part, fully reciprocated their affection ; and so firm was their union, that, in the profane spirit of the time, they gave themselves the appellation of the Trinity. The feelings which united Marguerite and Francis were

of the most devoted kind. The King, equally proud of her beauty and her genius, delighted to address her by the most complimentary, as well as most endearing names ; and such terms as "*ma mignonne*," "my Marguerite of Marguerites," but feebly expressed his admiration and affection. Marguerite deserved all his love and all his homage. The charms of her person and her mind, though rarely surpassed, were not more captivating than the sweetness of her temper, the suavity of her manners, and the genuine kindness of her heart. At the same time, she excelled the most accomplished ladies of the day in her attainments and learning ; and while she was surrounded by all the fascinations of the court, loved to loiter unobserved on the bleak steeps of Parnassus. Flattery did not withhold from her its customary tribute of incense, and in compliment to her personal attractions, she received the title of the Fourth Grace ; while as a scholar, a novelist, and a poet, she shares with Sappho the proud designation of the Tenth Muse.

Marguerite was in her seventeenth year when, at the express desire of Louis the Twelfth—for the crown had not yet devolved on her brother—she became the wife of Charles, Duke d'Alençon, himself but twenty. . . The young bride was in the first blush of bloom and beauty, as well as of life. Large eyes of deep clear blue shone beneath her dazzling forehead, which seemed to blend with her long golden tresses, looped up, rather than confined, by a circlet of gems. Of a majestic height, her figure was slender, but exquisitely rounded, and combined the symmetry of the Medicis with the grace of the gazelle. The bridegroom, D'Alençon, was handsome, but devoid of every quality that could win the respect, or engage the affection, of a young and gifted woman. It is not surprising, therefore, that the marriage was an unhappy

one, particularly to Marguerite. Shut up in the dreary castle of Argentau, the seat of her jealous and morose husband, she had no resource but to devote herself to literature ; and, drawing around her a few choice spirits, including Clement Marot, the celebrated poet, she occupied her leisure with the composition of the *Heptameron*—which, indeed, it had been better for her fair fame never to have written. Correspondence with her brother and the good Bishop of Meaux, with the diligent study of the Holy Scriptures, by which she was gradually led to adopt the doctrines of the Huguenots, afforded her more genuine consolation, and strengthened her for the still greater sorrows she was yet to sustain. While these were her pursuits in retirement, at other times, when summoned to the splendid court of Francis, she was beset by flatterers, parasites, and lovers, and surrounded by all the temptations of a gay and dissolute capital. She passed through this ordeal with becoming dignity, and with an unblemished reputation. Yet so incorrigible was the corruption of the time, that, in one instance, she was even subjected to violence ; and the Admiral Bonnivet, the handsomest and most dangerous of her admirers, is charged with attempting the crime which, in a succeeding generation, attached indelible odium to the name of Bothwell.

The fatal battle of Pavia, mainly lost by his cowardice, was the death-blow of the sickly D'Alençon, who survived his ignominious flight but a short time, when, sinking into an unhonoured grave, he left Marguerite, with his large estates, the precious legacy of freedom. Marguerite was impatient to fly to the bedside of her loved brother, now reported to be dying, in his solitary prison at Madrid. A safe-conduct, limiting her visit to two months, was wrung from the reluctant Emperor ; and after re-

peated delays, and a painful separation from her mother, the Princess embarked at the little port of Aigues-Mortes, and sailed for Spain.

Scarcely could she support the tardy progress of her journey, even after she had landed in Catalonia. "Oh ! how tedious," she writes, in a chanson composed on the road, "is the way to that goal where all my happiness reposes ! My eyes look everywhere for a messenger, and I pray to God continually to give back health to my King :—

" O qu'il sera le bien venu,
Celui qui frappant à ma porte
Dira, le Roi est revenu
En sa santé tres bonne et forte.
Alors sa sœur, plus mal que morte,
Courra baiser le messenger,
Qui telles nouvelles apporte
Que son frère est hors de danger."

Far other news awaited the unhappy princess. She found Francis, whom she had seen depart for Italy in the pride of life and health, stretched on a bed of pain, in what appeared to be the last throes of mortal sickness. The physicians gave no hope of his recovery, for, whatever they might do for his suffering body, they could not minister to the diseased mind, or pluck from the seared memory a rooted sorrow ; and it was only the consoling love of his sister, the healing hand of woman, that could raise up the fallen King. The careful nursing, the society, the soothing words of Marguerite, ever night and day by his side, effected what was indeed beyond medicine or the leech's skill ; and, aroused by her presence, Francis gradually became convalescent. In the interim, Marguerite spared no effort to obtain his release from captivity. After incessant evasions, the Emperor was compelled, by

her unwearied exertions and representations, to take the subject into serious consideration, and a treaty for the liberation of Francis was drawn up ; but the terms were so exacting and humiliating, that Marguerite could not counsel its acceptance. Francis now began to despair ; but not so his intrepid sister. It was her happy fortune to captivate every one she approached, whether noble or plebeian ; and in the narrow sphere of her brother's prison, her sweet and enchanting demeanour had won the devotion of a poor Moorish slave, employed to bring wood for the King's fire. One day, when the silent tears were chasing each other down her blanched cheek, this humble partisan threw himself at her feet, bewailed the captivity of the King, and her own sorrow, and suggested a plan for his escape. Francis, whose height and figure countenanced the deception, was, after dyeing his complexion, to pass out in the dress of the slave, while the latter remained a prisoner in his stead ; and relays of horses were to be provided on the road, to carry him without delay to the frontier. Marguerite eagerly caught at the project, which was as readily embraced by Francis ; but a treacherous page, who was admitted to their confidence, communicated their design to the Emperor, and the fugitive King was discovered and arrested just as he was quitting his prison.

The part which Marguerite took in this transaction was denounced as a breach of faith, and it was determined, on this plea, to make her also a captive, directly the period of her safe-conduct, now drawing to a close, left her at the Emperor's mercy. A friendly message from Bourbon warned the princess of her danger ; and though it seemed impossible that she could reach the frontier in the time that remained, she was instantly in the saddle, passed unmolested from Madrid, and made her way


through storm and rain, over rushing torrents and almost impassable mountains, to the Pyrenees, where she arrived only an hour before the time prescribed expired.

But, though no longer sharing his captivity, the heart of Marguerite was still in the prison-chamber of her brother ; and she knew no peace till, through the united exertions of herself and Louise, supported by the loyalty and devotion of the nation, Francis was restored to liberty. Perhaps he would have stood better with posterity, had he died in the majesty of his misfortunes.

Superior to the narrow prejudices of Louise and Francis, Marguerite was the mother of the French Reformation ; and it is singular that the same great movement was fostered in England by a woman no less beautiful, and raised by capricious fortune to the dangerous partnership of the throne. The name of Anne Boleyn, after being assailed with a thousand slanders, the weak inventions of malice, bigotry, and faction, still awakens the deepest feelings of sympathy and veneration in every English heart. Beauty, wit, learning, piety, all the accomplishments, the attractions, the graces, and the virtues of her sex, were concentrated in this lovely and most fascinating woman, whom poetry might have depicted as an angel, if misfortune had not made her a queen. Blemishes, indeed, she had—who is without ? but, as in the case of Marguerite de Valois, for some time her mistress and model, they were but skin-deep—not of the heart ; belonging to the age rather than herself. In her, levity was but a manner, and the little excesses of court life became guileless pastimes, followed more from fashion than inclination. Her accomplishments were as varied as they were numerous, and she especially excelled as a musician, playing with equal skill on the harp, the violin, and *the flute* ! Chateaubriant, a French nobleman

and courtier, describing her appearance in the splendid saloons of Francis the First, compares her musical performances with those of Orpheus, and affirms that they would have enchained the attention even of wolves and bears. As a dancer she might have disputed the palm with Taglioni; and her French admirer tells us that many new figures and steps, invented and introduced by the young English belle, were distinguished by her name. It is true, Anne played at cards and chess, and occasionally shook the dice-box; but these were the prevailing amusements of the day, countenanced equally by the Protestant Marguerite de Valois and the orthodox Catholic Princess Mary; and Anne did not, like Mary, spend the greater portion of her leisure in the masculine diversion of betting. The ill-fated Wyatt, speaking in the language and with the feelings of a lover, describes her personal charms as "rare and admirable." "Her favour," he continues, in more pedantic terms, "passing sweet and cheerful, was enhanced by her noble presence of shape and fashion, representing both mildness and majesty." Her beauty, however, like the soul within, was not absolutely faultless, and envy soon discovered that her left hand was furnished with the rudiment of a sixth finger, and that a large mole, carefully concealed by a collar-band, disfigured her fair round throat.

Anne, though contracted by her family to Sir Piers Butler, early conceived a sincere attachment for Henry Percy, son of the Earl of Northumberland, to whom she was induced to make a secret promise of marriage, which the young nobleman imprudently suffered to transpire. The news was communicated to Henry the Eighth, and awakened the sturdy King to the fact that, though yoked indissolubly to another, he was himself enslaved by Anne's artless charms. In this dilemma he had recourse to his



infallible counsellor and favourite, Cardinal Wolsey, that "great child of fortune," the bark of whose mighty genius was to be shivered on the rock of this headstrong passion. The Cardinal's first step, in seeking to forward the King's views, was to attempt to shake the fidelity of the accepted lover. "I marvel not a little at thy folly," he said, in a conversation with Percy, which we must greatly abridge, "that thou wouldst thus affiance thyself to a foolish young girl yonder in the court, Anne Boleyn. Dost thou not consider the estate that God"—(alas! how often has that name been profaned in the mouth of a cardinal)—"hath called thee to in this world? It had been most convenient and meet to have had thy father's consent in this case, and to have acquainted the King's Majesty therewith. But now see what you have done through your wilfulness. You have not only offended your father, but also your loving sovereign lord, and matched yourself with such a one as neither the King nor your father will consent to." Hereupon the young nobleman, instead of turning fiercely on the busy Cardinal, in the ruffling style of a Fauconbridge, began to cry, like a penitent and terrified boy. "Sir, I knew not the King's pleasure," he said, "and am sorry for it. I considered I was of good years, and thought myself able to choose a convenient wife as my fancy should guide me, not doubting that my lord and father would have been right well content. And in this matter I have gone so far that I really know not how to discharge myself, or my conscience." But conscience, whatever it might be to a peer, was a small barrier in the eyes of a cardinal; and no sooner was the word mentioned, than Wolsey considered the affair settled, and dismissed the young man with this soothing interrogatory:—"Thinkest thou that the King and I know not what we have to do in such weighty matters as this?"

But Anne, animated by a woman's sensibilities and a woman's devotion, was not vanquished so easily as her lover ; and she manifested coldness, and even repugnance, at the tender advances of the King. Fear, family influence, and intrigue, resentment at the defection of Percy, and perhaps a faint inkling of ambition, combined, at length, to overcome her reluctance ; and the dissolution of Henry's marriage with Katharine of Arragon too soon advanced her to the fatal dignity of Queen.

Anne's fall was as precipitate as her elevation. Prompted by a new passion, Henry found means to have her implicated in a common accusation with her brother Lord Rochfort, and four officers of the court, Sir Henry Norris, Sir Francis Weston, Mark Smeaton, and Brereton. The evidence offered in support of the cruel charge would have been ludicrous, had it not been also, in respect to its object, atrocious and monstrous. Everything was done to wring a confession from the alleged partners of her guilt ; but only Mark Smeaton, a man of ignoble birth, writhing under the tortures of the rack, could be induced to say a word to criminate her. An offer of his life, on the same ignominious terms, was indignantly rejected by Norris, who declared that he would "rather die a thousand deaths than accuse the Queen of a crime of which he believed her to be innocent." Anne herself, after submitting with patient dignity to the insult of a sham trial, heard with composure the sentence which condemned her, in the flower of her life, to be beheaded or burnt alive, at the pleasure of her ruthless consort. From that wicked tribunal she solemnly appealed, with clasped hands and upraised eyes, to the Judgment-Seat of Heaven. "O Father ! O Creator !" she cried, yet standing in the felon's bar, "thou, who art the way, the life, and the truth, thou knowest whether I have deserved this death."

Nor did her fortitude subside, when, solitary and friendless, she returned to the gloom of her prison-chamber. Severed from the world, deprived of her short-lived state, its pomps, pleasures, and vanities, she was sustained and cheered by the noble energies of her own mind, by the consolations of religion, and by the soothing admonitions of the Holy Scriptures. For her, death had no terrors, and she lightened the more serious duties of preparation by the composition of a dirge, beautifully expressive of her composure and resignation, and which, after setting it to music, she sang with her accustomed sweetness. One stanza, ringing with the inspiration of the heart, shows how completely she was reconciled to her fate :—

“ O Death ! rock me asleep !
Bring on my quiet rest,
Let pass my very guiltless ghost
Out of my careful breast.
Ring out the doleful knell !
Let its sound my death tell :
For I must die,
There is no remedy,
For now I die ! ”

On the scaffold she preserved the same calm and majestic demeanour ; and it was remarked by an eye-witness, who had seen her in the heyday of her power, that she had never looked so lovely and engaging as at that awful moment. Standing by the side of the block, she addressed a few touching words to the spectators, declaring that she came there only to die, and thus yield herself humbly to the will of the King. “ To me,” cried the innocent victim of a tyrant’s passions, “ he was ever a good and gentle sovereign lord. If any person will meddle with my cause, I require them to judge the best. Thus I take my leave of the world and of you ; and I heartily desire

you all to pray for me." She calmly laid her head on the block, observing, "Alas, poor head! in a very brief space thou wilt roll in the dust; and as in life thou didst not merit to wear the crown of a queen, so in death thou deservest no better fate than this." And, again entreating the prayers of those around, she commended her chastened soul to God, and submitted to the stroke of the executioner.

Such was the end of one who may be regarded, under Providence, as the first cause, author, and nursing-mother, so to speak, of the Reformation in England. Never was so great a work effected in so short a time, or by means so gentle and so blameless. A young and innocent woman, by her sagacity and prudence, as much as by the influence of her charms, proved more than a match for a powerful camerilla, a wily cardinal, and a subtle legate, overthrowing in a few brief weeks, by her indomitable constancy, that colossal ecclesiastical despotism which had for a thousand years ruled both king and people. History has yet to render justice to the character of Queen Anne Boleyn—to her high motives, her noble aspirations, her virtues, and her genius; and humanity will never deny a sigh to her misfortunes and her fate.

What one Queen so assiduously fostered, and so carefully established, another, her contemporary and successor, vainly sought to eradicate. When the English crown devolved on Mary, the seeds of the Reformation were too widely disseminated, and had taken too deep a root, to be violently plucked up, even by the horrible means which, not without reason, obtained for the recusant Queen the epithets of "scarlet" and "bloody." Bigotry, indeed, impelled Mary to acts which one shudders to associate with the tender name of woman, and blushes to record. They were, if possible, the more revolting in her case, and the

more disgraceful, as the loyal affection of the people had advanced her to the throne, with a full knowledge of her attachment to Rome, yet had refrained from exacting any guarantee for the maintenance of the national faith. Soon they discovered that Mary regarded them only as heretics ; and, in fact, her pious fury, arrested by no scruple, outstripped the zeal of her most intolerant prelates, and Gardiner and Pole found the English Church again subject to the Pope, at the moment that they were secretly considering how to maintain its independence. Such measures naturally excited a general feeling of discontent ; and Sir Thomas Wyatt, and other Protestant leaders, impatient of papal ascendancy, availed themselves of this disaffected spirit to raise an insurrection, with the view of recovering the crown for Lady Jane Grey, who, at the time a prisoner in the Tower, was completely in the power of Mary, and hence, instead of being benefited, could not but be placed in extreme jeopardy by their rash proceedings.

Lady Jane Grey was one of the most shining characters of the age ; and, by a happy destiny—for she was illustrious rather by her sorrows and her virtues, than by her deeds—she remains to this hour one of the most popular heroines on the page of history. Beautiful, accomplished, learned, she was no less pious than gifted, and the angelic sweetness of her temper won the admiration and applause of her bitterest enemies. Like Titus, she sought never to lose a day ; and her time was distributed, in allotted and regular portions, between the duties of religion, the pursuit of learning, the management of her household, and the endearing occupations of domestic life. Far from coveting the splendours of royalty, she preferred the simple pleasures of retirement, and would have wished to hide herself, like the violet, under the veil of her own modesty.

When, on the death of Edward the Sixth, she was saluted as Queen, she fell down in a swoon, and not till her ambitious but imbecile husband resorted to violence, would she consent, by any overt act, to assume the perilous title. She abdicated her brief sovereignty with eager satisfaction, though fully aware of the responsibility and the danger in which it had involved her. In her last moments she was attended by Feckenham, Mary's chaplain, a zealous but not intolerant Catholic, who, though at first regarding her as a heretic, ended by deeming her an angel, and was wrung to the heart by her gentleness and submission. Jane mildly told him that her time was too short for controversy ; and, flying to the Queen, he procured her a respite of three days, in the delusive hope that, in this interval, he might restore such a saint to Rome. But the pious lady informed him, with a sweet smile, that he had placed a wrong construction on her words, as she was quite ready to die, but wished to avoid all religious discussions. " True it was," she added, " her flesh shuddered, as was natural to frail mortality, but her spirit would spring rejoicing into eternal light, where she hoped the mercy of God would receive it." And in this frame of mind, composed, solemn, but not sad, she ascended the terrible scaffold, still reeking with the blood of her husband, and laid down her unblemished life.

But Mary was not content with political victims and the tame justice of the axe ; her pious fury demanded martyrs, and could only be appeased by the lurid flames of persecution. In the upper walks of life, all were ready to conform, and so escaped harmless ; but the humbler classes, animated by a higher spirit, clung to the pure doctrines of the Reformation, and boldly accepted the crown of martyrdom. Women of all ages walked without fear to the stake, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer

in such a cause, and could follow, at an humble distance, in the footsteps of the devout Cranmer, the meek Latimer, and the holy Ridley. Among these genuine saints was Mrs. Joyce Lewis, the wife of a Warwickshire gentleman, residing at Mancetta, who, amidst the seductions of a gay and dissipated life, had been attracted and converted by the preaching of Glover. On being cited before the Bishop, her husband, though a resolute man, was terrified into submission ; but Joyce adhered to her faith, and refused the orthodox tests of adoring the crucifix and crossing herself with holy water. Persevering in her constancy, she was thrown into a loathsome dungeon, and condemned to be burnt alive ; but her devout behaviour in prison so affected the Sheriff, that he continually evaded carrying out the sentence during his term of office ; and thus she spent twelve months in confinement, in patient expectation of her terrible fate. This dreadful period of agony was devoted to prayer and religious meditation ; and when, at last, the long-contemplated hour of martyrdom arrived, she could hail it as a relief. On the previous night, she was visited by a Catholic priest, who earnestly besought her to confess ; but she calmly replied, that she "had confessed to Christ her Saviour, and looked to Him alone for forgiveness." When apprised by the Sheriff that she must proceed to the stake, she said in a firm voice—"Master Sheriff, your message is welcome, and I thank my God that he will permit me to venture my life in His service." She exhibited the same composure and lofty fortitude at the stake, though the spectators, forming an immense multitude, could not repress their tears ; and as the flames shot up around, her face was seen raised to Heaven, shining with the same serene light that beamed from that of St. Stephen.

The last days of Mary were embittered equally by

domestic sorrow and vexation, and by political calamity. Her husband, Philip of Spain, whom she had loved with all the little fervour of which her nature was capable, neglected and deserted her ; and she was happily disappointed in her hopes of becoming a mother. The French easily snatched from her feeble hand the keys of Calais, the gate of France, adding humiliation to misfortune ; and so deeply was she affected by this disaster, that she declared the fatal name of Calais would, at her death, be found engraved on her heart. Nor can we doubt that she was also haunted by remorse, and by the gloomy apprehensions and misgivings which superstition, whatever plea it might urge, could neither silence nor banish in so morose and so guilty a soul. Death at length relieved the world of her presence, and she expired in November, 1558, in the 43rd year of her age.

Scarcely had the priests of Rome administered to Mary their last sacrament of Extreme Unction, when the accession of Elizabeth, amidst the acclamations and rejoicings of her subjects, once more planted on the soil of England the standard of Protestant truth. This great Princess, trained in the hard school of adversity, under jealous surveillance, a sort of prisoner at large, and sometimes in imminent peril of the scaffold, ascended the throne at an age which, though it secured her the advantage of a mature and experienced judgment, had not yet thrown off the innate weaknesses of her sex. No matrimonial yoke had sobered her feelings, or dispelled her romance ; and she clung to the foibles and delusions of youth, after its bright noon had set. Her character was a strange problem—a mystery ; and it was happily said of her, by one who knew her well, that “ if to-day she was more than a man, to-morrow she was less than a woman.” Yet allowance must be made for a princess who, from her earliest child-

hood, was exposed to the adulation, intrigues, and sinister addresses of gay, brilliant, and handsome courtiers, eager to seize a hand which might hereafter grasp a sceptre or confer a crown ; and, under such circumstances, we may forgive, in the decline of middle age, what indeed appears ridiculous in the matron of seventy.

Elizabeth was only thirteen when she excited the ambitious hopes of the unprincipled Lord Admiral Seymour, the Adonis of his time. At this early age she received from him an offer of marriage, which she rejected in terms that, comparing them with her tender years, induce a suspicion that they were dictated by an older and wiser head. Seymour, however afflicted by her refusal, consoled himself within a week by marrying Katharine Parr, whose previous consort, bluff King Henry, had been but a month dead. Elizabeth went to reside with the happy pair, and Seymour took advantage of her presence, to insinuate himself into her good graces. Her severe studies, which included the principal classic authors in their native tongue, and the New Testament in Greek, were often invaded by the handsome Admiral, with whom the young Princess delighted to flirt and romp, in a manner creditable to neither party. The death of Katharine Parr left Seymour at liberty to renew his proposal to Elizabeth, now in her sixteenth year, and possessing at least an ordinary share of personal attractions. There is reason to believe that, through the connivance of her attendants, he obtained secret interviews with the Princess, at hours when no male visitor should have been admitted, and it is certain that Elizabeth did not absolutely repel his addresses. On one occasion, she was told by Parry, her treasurer, that Seymour " would come and see her grace ;" " which declaration," says this loquacious gossip, in his candid confession, " she seemed to take very gladly. On

which casting in my mind the reports I had heard of a marriage between them, and observing that at all times she showed such countenance that it appeared she was very glad to hear of him, I took occasion to ask her whether, if the council would like it, she would marry with him. Whereto she replied, ' When that comes to pass, I shall do as God will put into my mind.' " Undoubtedly a very prudent answer, which, perhaps, would have silenced Master Parry, if Elizabeth's confidante, Kate Ashley, had not " disclosed so many particulars to him, especially of the late Queen Katharine finding her husband with his arms about her grace "—not a discouraging reminiscence to so wily an intriguer. All Seymour's schemes, however, were baffled by the council, or rather by the superior craft of his brother ; and his audacious courtship of the King's sister was expiated on the scaffold.

Though Elizabeth clung through life to the solitary state of single blessedness, no Princess or Queen—perhaps no woman—ever received more proposals for her hand ; and to the last she was surrounded by a host of admirers, who saw on her faded cheeks all the glowing bloom of youth. Such a state of things naturally provoked slander and afforded ground for continual scandals ; and, indeed, some letters lately published, in the *Life and Times of Sir Christopher Hatton*, by the lamented Sir Harris Nicolas, cast grave and serious imputations on the illustrious name of Elizabeth. But, in the first instance, it was chiefly on Robert Dudley, whom she created Earl of Leicester, and, subsequently, on the chivalrous Earl of Essex, that she bestowed her protection and favour. Her regard for Leicester was so strong, and so openly evinced, that, at one time, it occasioned real alarm to her ministers ; and the cold and cautious Burleigh ventured to make it the subject of a sarcasm. Elizabeth had

appointed Leicester to the post of Master of the Horse, when she was informed by the great minister of the nuptials of the Duchess of Suffolk with her equerry, Adrian Stokes. "What!" exclaimed the Queen, "has she married her horsekeeper?" "Yes, your majesty," was the caustic reply, "and she says you would like to do the same." Yet, at this time, Leicester was already married, and his wife, the beautiful and amiable Amy Robsart, rendered immortal by the magic genius of Scott, was kept a prisoner in the country, lest her presence at court should avert from her perjured husband the sunshine of royal favour. A still darker fate awaited her, and there is little doubt that, though made to present the appearance of an accident, the catastrophe which hurried her into eternity was a subtle contrivance of the perfidious and unscrupulous Leicester.

Essex, the favourite of Elizabeth's maturer years, was first introduced at court by Leicester, whose daughter he had married; and through his handsome person, and numerous engaging qualities, he speedily took precedence of all competitors. His haughty spirit, indeed, could ill brook the presence of a rival; and the favour which the royal coquette extended for a time to the gallant Charles Blount elicited from him so contemptuous a remark, that Blount was provoked into sending him a challenge. This led to a duel in Marylebone Park, in which Essex was slightly wounded, and Elizabeth, who heard of the encounter with extreme displeasure, annoyed at the arrogance and presumption of Essex, declared with an oath, "it was fitting that some one or other should take the Earl down, and teach him manners; otherwise there would be no ruling him."

The impetuous and rash temper of Essex ultimately caused his ruin. Presuming on his great influence with

his royal mistress, he lost sight of the fact that she was surrounded, as sovereigns have seldom been, by able and sagacious ministers, who, by their wise counsels, overruled the mischievous effects that might otherwise have resulted from his ascendancy ; and, emboldened by impunity, he proceeded from one extravagance to another, till, in the end, he treated the Queen with rudeness, contumely, and even violence. On one occasion, Elizabeth was so exasperated by his insolent demeanour, that she actually boxed his ears, on which the imperious Earl, instead of patiently submitting to the correction, turned furiously upon her, half-drew his sword, and swore he would not have taken such a blow from her father. The Lord-Admiral flung himself before his menaced sovereign ; and with difficulty Essex, after calling her "a King in petticoats," was persuaded to leave the council-chamber.

Gradually a great change came over Elizabeth : her health began to fail ; her spirits to sink ; and the proceedings of Essex in Ireland, where, much against his inclination, he had been appointed Lord-Deputy, and where he had found everything in disorder, materially aggravated her depression. Immured in the seclusion of Nonsuch, she heard a report of her own death, which had been very widely circulated, and, thus reminded of her mortality, was continually murmuring to herself the ominous words—"dead, but not buried." The misguided conduct of Essex added to her distress and her perplexities ; and at last the haughty noble, after attempting to create an insurrection, was brought to trial, convicted of treason, and sentenced to be beheaded.

The poor Queen was now placed in a situation which engages both our sympathy and interest. . Resentment, justice, the law, her stern and implacable ministers, demanded with one voice the forfeited life of her favourite ;

but, while she was thus closely pressed by his enemies, her own heart became his too willing advocate. No sooner was the death-warrant signed than it was recalled, suspended, or cancelled ; and, meanwhile, the unhappy Elizabeth, even in affliction a coquette, at one time feigned to be the gayest of the gay, at another sought no disguise for her crushed and blighted feelings. Eventually the foes of Essex triumphed ; he was brought to the block ; and his royal mistress, who then yielded up her last tie to the world, was never known to smile again.

In happier days, Elizabeth had given Essex a ring, with an injunction to send it to her, by a safe hand, whenever he stood in need of her protection ; and this memento of her affection was actually transmitted to the Countess of Nottingham, for the purpose of being presented to the Queen ; but, betraying the trust reposed in her, the Countess never executed the commission. On her death-bed, tormented by remorse, she confessed the treacherous act to Elizabeth, who had come to visit her, and implored the royal pardon ; but the ancient fire of the Tudors, still smouldering in those aged veins, was kindled by the intelligence ; and, seizing the dying woman by the shoulders, the incensed monarch shook her in her bed, exclaiming, " God may pardon you, but I never will ! "

Such were the weaknesses, such the faults, of one of the most renowned sovereigns, and most illustrious women, that ever adorned the English throne. However she may be represented, whatever scandal may allege, or testimony almost prove, against her fair fame, Elizabeth occupies a pedestal in history accorded to but few ; and England still exults in the Augustan splendour and unsurpassed glory of her reign. The lofty muse of Shakespeare, the immortal wisdom of Bacon, the sagacity of Burleigh, the daring and

enterprise of Drake, the undying names of Sydney, Raleigh, and Walsingham, surround this great Princess like a halo, and, by their association, shed additional lustre over her character and life. In a troublous period, under circumstances of unparalleled difficulty, when the nation was divided by rival factions and by rival sects, she grasped the helm of the state with the spirit, if not the hand of a giant, and guided it uninjured through every danger. Her will was supreme; and whether her venerable counsellors assembled to deliberate on her tooth-ache or to give law to Europe—whether she was flirting with every comely man in her palace, or majestically reviewing her troops at Tilbury Fort, she was still the bright particular star which commanded the homage of every eye. She reduced anarchy and confusion to order, established the reformed religion on a basis which, thank Heaven! has never been subverted; and herself respected, while she boldly administered the law. Rich and poor, high and low, regarded her with the same devoted, enthusiastic feelings; and the poor wretch condemned to lose his hand for protesting against the marriage of her highness's grace with "the little French Duke," could still wave his bleeding stump in the air, and cry "God save the Queen!"

Cotemporary with Elizabeth, a female sovereign swayed also the mighty destinies of France. The too-celebrated Catharine de Medicis, daughter of the Duke of Urbino, and niece of Pope Clement VII., was born at Florence in 1519, and in her fifteenth year became the wife of Henry, Duke of Orleans, son of Francis I., and himself destined to wear the Gallic crown. Catharine is described by Moreri as being superior, in mental as well as personal attractions, to every woman of her time; and there can be no doubt that, to extraordinary beauty, she

added all the blandishments that Italian craft and great natural gifts could inspire. Her ruling sentiment was dissimulation ; and it was conspicuously manifested at every period of her life, by the foulest acts of treachery and murder. She was attached by birth rather than feeling—for she appears to have had no religious principles—to the most ultra section of the Catholic party ; but her love of intrigue was so inveterate, that she could remain steadfast to no cause, and was thus continually balancing faction against faction, and veering from one side to the other, till in the end she excited the distrust and detestation of all. Still, she possessed, with many serious defects, rare administrative talents, adequate to the responsibilities she was called upon to undertake ; and at times her government was distinguished by a wise and temperate spirit, apparently as much in advance of herself as of her country and her age.

Her husband succeeded his father, the unfortunate Francis I., by the title of Henry II. ; and after ten years of married life, she presented him with his first child, who was followed, in quick succession, by nine others, three of whom became kings, and one a queen. During this period France was distracted by political and religious dissensions, which, at length, broke forth in civil war ; and the household of Catharine was a focus of conspiracy, plots, and intrigues. The better to carry out her projects, she surrounded herself by a train of complaisant courtiers, who were dexterously employed to win, by their flattery and blandishments, those incorruptible opponents to be purchased by gold ; and they who could withstand both temptations, were, it is said, removed by poison or the dagger. Her children were reared in the familiar practice of every vice, that they might become an easier prey in after-life to her overruling influence, and their

career was marked throughout by the same vile and execrable spirit. During the brief reign of her eldest son, Francis II., the husband of the unfortunate Mary Queen of Scots, she contrived to counteract the ascendancy of the Guise party, paving the way for a reconciliation with Henry of Navarre, which, by dint of corruption and intrigue, she accomplished in the succeeding reign, when she exercised the supreme authority in the name of her son Charles. Her imperious spirit, however, could ill brook either the independent tone or the pure faith of the Huguenots, and a desperate quarrel soon ensued, on which both parties flew to arms, and Catharine, burning for revenge, planned and executed the barbarous massacre of St. Bartholomew.

Catharine finally triumphed over the disorders into which her restless spirit of intrigue had plunged the kingdom, and handed it over in a peaceful, if not a prosperous condition, to her son Henry, whom the premature death of his brother called from the barbaric throne of Poland to that of France. But she was now obliged to abdicate her functions, and had the mortification, in her retirement, after all her scheming and finessing, to see herself succeeded by the hated Guises, the inveterate enemies of her house. Rumour accuses her of having prompted the assassination of the Duke de Guise, accompanied as it was by circumstances of the blackest perfidy; but she declared at the time, with the most solemn asseverations, that she was wholly innocent of the crime. She expired in her seventieth year, in comparative obscurity, universally detested and despised.

Catharine had thought to secure the adhesion of Henry of Navarre, gradually drawn nearer and nearer to the crown, by the hand of her daughter, the beautiful Marguerite; but this weak and profligate princess could exer-

cise no influence on the inconstant mind of Henry ; and, indeed, she was too intent on the pursuit of pleasure to lend herself, by any personal act, to the insidious designs of her mother. On Henry's accession to the throne, her conduct became such an open scandal, that the monarch was compelled to seek a divorce ; and she willingly consented to the arrangement, when the death of Gabrielle d'Estrées, by an unlooked-for catastrophe, assured her that she would not be succeeded by a hated rival.

The King was no sooner absolutely liberated, than he engaged himself, under a certain contingency, to marry Mademoiselle d'Entragues, afterwards created Marquise de Verneuil, who had succeeded the fair Gabrielle in his affections. But the wise Sully left him no time to complete so disgraceful a contract ; and, while Henry was immersed in the giddy vortex of pleasure, his minister adroitly hurried forward negotiations for the hand of Marie de Medicis, and, after an interval of a few days, Henry learnt, to his surprise, that he was again a husband.

Marie, at the time of her marriage, was in her twenty-fourth year. Her beauty was of the highest Italian cast—dark, soft, majestic, with eyes of melting lustre, and long, luxuriant raven tresses. Henry reluctantly quitted the château of his favourite to meet the young Queen at Lyons ; but two brief days of her society, though relieved by a succession of fêtes and receptions, were sufficient to wear out the love and the patience of the gay monarch, and, deserting his bride, he flew back to the boudoir of his mistress. Such was the first lesson which Marie received of the dissolute temperament of her husband, affording a bitter foretaste of trials and sorrows yet to come. The cruel affront, indeed, which thus met her on the threshold of her new career, was quickly followed by

alights still more marked, and every day brought some fresh proof of Henry's undisguised infidelity, insensibility, and indifference. A marriage formed from ambition on one side, and convenience on the other, could hardly be expected to enchain, by its slender ties, a disposition so volatile as Henry's ; but, in fact, his excesses were without bounds, and, as regards modern times, without parallel. The unhappy Queen had scarcely reached Paris, when she was insulted by the presentation of Madame de Verneuil, who had been appointed by the King to a post in her household, and was publicly introduced to the outraged Marie by the Duchess de Nemours, a princess of the blood. Marie, supported by the pride of race and of woman, received the audacious favourite with becoming dignity, though her quivering lip might slightly reveal the wild agitation within. Coldly acknowledging the Marquise's obeisance, she turned to her attendant ladies, and resumed the conversation which this painful incident had interrupted. But Madame de Verneuil, as lost to modesty as to virtue, was not to be so easily repulsed ; and she impudently joined in the discourse, addressed herself directly to Marie, and wrung from the surprised Queen the honour of a reply. From this moment her rivalry assumed a more marked, offensive, and undisguised aspect.

In such a court, a young and inexperienced Queen could assert no authority, and exercise but little influence. Her Italian taste, indeed, exhibiting itself in her toilet, procured for Marie the undisputed sovereignty of the fashions ; but a nature so ambitious and so haughty could not be satisfied with such a narrow dominion. The warm passions of the south urged her into perpetual contests with the King, his parasites, and his mistresses ; and every encounter diminished, instead of extending, her

dignity and power. Long impunity had given vice a recognised position at the court of France ; and genius as well as courage—prudence, sagacity, and judgment, were required, more than indignant scorn, to meet its unblushing front. Every class was infected by the same rank corruption, and it was vain to expect shame, when there was no idea of purity. Marie insensibly yielded to despair, and to the fell spirit of the age ; she encouraged her attendants, soon alive to her ruling infirmities, to whisper in her ear the gossip of Henry's mistresses, condescended to quarrel with those abandoned women, abused them in private, suffered them to meet her in public, and thus degraded herself to their level. By such means the evil became more widely spread and more deeply rooted ; a fair name ceased to be valued, because, in this indiscriminate association, it was no longer honoured ; and virtue shrank from untarnished rags, when infamy swept by in velvet.

The inconstancy of Henry, which had so often involved him in personal danger, and brought a moral plague on the whole French nation, finally produced, as regards himself, still more fatal effects. His persecution of the Princess de Condé compelled that beautiful lady to fly, with her insulted husband, to the hostile territory of the Netherlands ; and a demand for their surrender being refused by Philip of Spain, Henry, for this frivolous and unworthy cause, determined to plunge his kingdom into a sanguinary war. In the midst of his preparations for the struggle, he received numerous warnings to prepare for another and more gloomy event. His astrologer, Thomassin, warned him of his approaching end, and, as it is said, predicted not only the day, but the hour of his death. One of his nobles was supernaturally commanded in a vision to announce to him the same awful intelli-

gence. Marie, sleeping by his side, awoke in the night with a piercing cry, and declared that she saw him bleeding beneath the knife of the assassin. But Henry, if he possessed no other quality of a hero, was brave to a fault, and he affected to laugh at these successive warnings, although, in fact, he secretly deemed them prophetic. On the fatal morning, he was reminded by the Duke de Vendôme, his natural son, that the famous astrologer, La Brosse, as well as Thomassin, had pronounced that day to be fraught with danger to his person, and the Duke entreated him to adopt some additional precautions. "La Brosse," cried the reckless monarch, "is an old impostor, who sought to get at your money, and you are a simpleton to believe him. My days can only be numbered by God." After spending the morning in his cabinet, he entered his carriage, and commanded the obsequious attendants to proceed to the Arsenal, where, intent on forwarding the military armaments, he proposed to visit his great minister Sully, the Grand Master of the artillery; and as if under the spell of fate, refused to be accompanied by his guards. The messenger of death awaited his approach in a narrow street connecting the Rue la Feronnerie with that of St. Honoré. Two cumbersome waggons, piled with produce for the market, blocked up the crooked thoroughfare, and the attendants pushed forward to remove the obstruction, leaving the royal carriage unwatched. The assassin, muffled in a capacious cloak, stole from his recess, raised himself on the wheel of the vehicle, and looked in. Henry was engaged in reading a letter: the deadly knife, thrust through the open window, was unseen; and the next moment it was buried in his heart.

Nothing could exceed the grief of Marie on hearing of the catastrophe, yet such was the factious spirit of the

court, that tongues were not wanting, when the first excitement had passed, to accuse her of complicity in the assassination. For this slander history affords not the slightest ground ; and there can be no doubt that her sorrow for the King was sincere, though brief—the poisoned sweets of power speedily consoling her for his loss. The station of Regent, to which she had been nominated by Henry himself, opened a wide field for her ambition, and, in some respects, was not unsuited to her talents ; but something more than talent is required for the government of a great nation, and Marie possessed all the arrogance, without the genius, of Irene. She had not even the art to secure the affection of her son, who was one day to be her sovereign ; and the youthful Louis, while externally treated with every mark of respect, was too often subjected to the discipline of the rod. After one of these ill-advised whippings, Marie, as usual, rising on his appearance, received him with a profound obeisance, when Louis addressed her in words which might have alarmed a more timid mind. “Madam,” said he, sternly, “I should be better pleased with a little less curtsying and a little less flogging.”

A conspiracy, hatched in Louis’ favourite resort, the falconry, by De Luynes, the master of his hawks, a clerk, and a gardener, the monarch’s choice companions, terminated the arbitrary reign of Marie ; and from being the ruler of France she became a prisoner in the gloomy fortress of Blois. But the fallen Princess was not yet without friends. A plan was arranged for her escape ; and in the middle of a dark night she contrived, not without difficulty and pain, to squeeze her now portly person through the window of her closet, and then descended by a rope-ladder to the narrow ramparts. Here, however, both her strength and courage were ex-

hausted, and she declared herself unable to continue the descent to the fosse surrounding the walls of the château. In this dilemma her two attendants wrapped her in a mantle, and hazarded the perilous expedient of lowering her by a rope. She reached the ground in safety, sprang into a carriage which was in waiting, and four fleet horses, impelled by whip and spur, bore her to a secure refuge.

The final ruin of Marie was accomplished by Richelieu, whom she had, in the day of her power, first started on his career of greatness. While Louis the Thirteenth employed his little mind in daubing prints, and his leisure in beating a drum or blowing a horn, the subtle minister, though wielding all the prerogatives of a king, could still feel a nervous jealousy of Marie. His vindictive enmity pursued her in her exile, when, a wanderer and a fugitive, she sought an asylum, first in distracted England, where her daughter shared the throne of Charles, and subsequently in the inhospitable capital of the Netherlands. It was reserved for a poor artist to give a last shelter to the widow of Henry the Fourth, in brighter times his patroness and benefactress, the unhappy mother of France's King and England's Queen. In a small chamber, in an obscure street of Cologne, in which the glowing genius of Rubens had been ushered into the world, the once fascinating and all-powerful Marie de Medicis—so long surrounded by regal splendours, attended by nobles, and invested with absolute authority—here, on a wretched bed, in a state of destitution, and after she had been reduced to the necessity of burning the miserable furniture in her chamber as firewood—the great Marie de Medicis expired, with her latest breath murmuring in prayer the name of her undutiful son.

In the sixteenth century the court of France was, in

more than one instance, the cradle of misfortune to Royalty. Here it was that the lovely Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, as wife of the young Dauphin, afterwards Francis the Second, commenced, in the marble halls of Fontainebleau, her chequered course of gaiety and sorrow. From this sunny atmosphere she was transplanted to the chilly north, in the very flower of youth and beauty, though already a widow. Scotland, so long left to the uneasy sway of a regency, was now torn by factions, distracted by religious discords, and barely preserved from the worst excesses of anarchy. Such a kingdom was a sad heritage for so young, so gentle, so inexperienced, and so brilliant a woman. After sitting at the fairy feet of Marguerite de Valois, and mingling in the gorgeous dissipation of the Louvre, with the *chansons* of Clement Marot, and the courtly lips of De Rohan or Montmorency, ringing out compliments to her unequalled charms, the gay but innocent Mary was immured in the gloomy chambers of Holyrood, menaced on one side by grim mailed warriors, ready to snatch the sceptre from her hand, and on the other by rigid and morose puritans, animated by a fiery hatred of her religion, and teaching the stern doctrine that to be cheerful was a weakness, and to smile a sin. It could excite no surprise if, in such a situation, this fair young Queen had been betrayed into some little indiscretions, which the eye of fanaticism, or the unscrupulous tongue of slander, might magnify into guilt; but modern candour is stunned by the unbounded virulence of her enemies, in imputing to her crimes which surpass belief. Happily these accusations are quite unsupported by facts; and it is no slight vindication of the injured and calumniated Mary, that Elizabeth, at a time when she was treating her with great severity, and consequently was interested in tarnishing

her reputation, honestly refused, in reply to a petition from the Countess of Lennox, the mother of Darnley, to investigate charges so improbable and so unfounded. Ultimately the Countess herself was persuaded of Mary's innocence, and became, from that time, the firm and attached friend of her who is accused, by the voice of faction, of murdering her son.

It was after escaping from a long captivity in Lochleven Castle, that the ill-fated Mary, at the head of a hastily-levied army, imprudently ventured on the sanguinary battle of Langside, which ended in her total overthrow, leaving her no alternative but a retreat into England. This was indeed running into the lion's mouth, though, as it proved, she had less to fear from the jealousy of Elizabeth, than the cabals of her courtiers. Every motive, in fact, conspired to array against her the political and religious prejudices of the ruling statesmen; and Leicester, Burleigh, and Walsingham were equally bent on her ruin. Mary was entrapped into a succession of plots, which, while they endangered the peace of the country, excited continual apprehensions in the harassed mind of Elizabeth; both of the misguided Queens were betrayed; and finally Elizabeth yielded a reluctant assent to Mary's execution. This was after she had given utterance to her tortured feelings in those emphatic words—"I swear by the living God, that I would give one of my own arms to be cut off, so that some way could be provided for us both to live in peace." "*Mortua non mordet*," whispered one of her counsellors, who had been despatched by the King of Scots to intercede for Mary's life; "a dead woman cannot bite."

But a darker aspersion is cast upon the name of Elizabeth, in the letter to Mary's stern gaolers, said to have been written by her command, in which, after a little

fencing of words, they are desired to find out some way of "*shortening the life* of the Scots Queen ;" and Secretary Davison accuses his royal mistress of having proposed this foul crime, worthy of the black soul of John, or the blood-stained hand of Richard of Gloucester. But the statements of crafty and guilty ministers must be received with caution, particularly when they are at variance with the obvious complexion of events. The execution of Mary was, after all, effected by stealth—precipitately hurried forward, without the knowledge or the approval of her great rival ; and Elizabeth heard of the fatal event with surprise, indignation, and even tears. Mary had died not only as a heroine, but as a Christian, beseeching Heaven to forgive her ruthless and implacable enemies ; and it was by the blazing of bonfires, and the merry pealing of bells, that Elizabeth was first apprized of her safety—and her disgrace.

XVI.

LATTER DAYS.

THE accession of the Stuarts to the Crown of England opened a new era in our annals ; and their *régime*, extending to the death of Anne, and nominally much later, marks a notable period in the social history of the world. There was a secret understanding with King James, that Lady Scroope, one of the attendants of the bedchamber, should notify the death of Elizabeth to the Scottish monarch by an express messenger, who was to present a blue ring as a pledge of his veracity ; and as the poor Queen was announced to be dying, her ladyship's brother,

Sir Robert Carey, held himself in readiness at Richmond Palace, with a strong and fleet horse, to start at any moment on this momentous errand. Directly Elizabeth expired, the ring was thrown from the window of the royal apartments, the cavalier sprang on his horse, and sixty hours afterwards arrived at Edinburgh, rushed into the King's bedchamber, and saluting him as the sovereign of England, presented the concerted token. "Enough!" cried James; "I know by this ring you are a faithful messenger."

It would be out of the province of this work to enter into an examination of the character of James, except in so far as it was calculated, by its immediate bearing on the courtiers, to influence the manners and the morals of his subjects, and the general tone of society; and there can be no doubt that his habits of drinking and swearing, his coarse buffoonery, and unbecoming encouragement of loose jests, did exercise a most pernicious effect, as well on the manners of women as of men. On the point of drinking, the fact is strongly attested by Sir John Harrington, who, in a letter to Barlow the Secretary, says, "Those whom I could never get to taste good English liquors, now follow the fashion, and wallow in drunken delights. The ladies abandon their sobriety, and are seen rolling about in intoxication." Dirt was also a characteristic of the court; and the Countess of Dorset, after paying her devoir at the royal palace of Theobalds, the constant retreat of James, discovered that it had been visited by one of the plagues of Egypt, and brought away a swarm of the odious insects on her garments. The King's love of vulgar jokes found a willing pander in the foremost lady of the court—Mary Villiers, Countess of Buckingham; and she rarely failed to win his applause. Once, indeed, she received a severe reproof; but this was pro-

voked less by her infamous conduct than by the infelicity of her device, which was made to include a pig, an animal so extremely obnoxious to the King, that, in his "Counterblast to Tobacco," he pronounced it to be a suitable dish for the Evil One. The anecdote is related by Wilson, who affirms that the Countess and Buckingham, considering how they should amuse the modern Saul, then suffering from a fit of gloom, ushered into his presence a young damsel, carrying a small pig dressed in long-clothes, to represent an infant, and followed by a servant attired as a bishop in full canonicals. The pretended prelate, aping the episcopal gravity, began to read the baptismal service from the Prayer-Book, when the revolting proceeding was fortunately interrupted by a squeak from the pig, which at once exposed the trick. James was extremely indignant at this discovery, and turning angrily to the Countess, exclaimed, "What profanation is this? Begone! begone!"

Anne of Denmark, the consort of James, was an amiable, though gay and imprudent princess, causing more than one deed of violence by her thoughtless levity. Her tragic flirtation with the Earl of Murray is commemorated by the old Scottish ballad:—

"O, the bonnie Earl of Murray!
He was the Queen's love!"

Murray was attacked by the Earl of Huntley, also an admirer of the Queen, and, driven from his castle with his long, silken tresses in flames, was overtaken by his furious rival, who plunged his dagger into his face. "You have marred a better face than your own," was the bitter taunt of the expiring beau, as he fixed his glazed eyes on the assassin. James was suspected of having instigated the murder, as well as that of young Ruthven, who succeeded Murray in the Queen's favour. Ruthven, indeed, was scarcely more prudent than Anne

herself, and openly proclaimed his attachment to his royal mistress. But the days of romance had gone by, and the doubting and jealous King repudiated the figment of platonic affection. Walking in the gardens of Falkland palace, he saw the youthful Ruthven lying on the lawn asleep, and on his breast was a ribbon, which the suspicious monarch had that morning presented to the Queen. Beatrice Ruthven, the cavalier's sister, happening to approach at the moment, saw the King's agitation, as he instantly turned back to the palace, she drew the ribbon from her brother's neck, and flew with it to Anne. Barely could she retire by a side-door from the royal chamber, when the Queen was confronted by James, who, in accents trembling with passion, asked to see the fatal ribbon. It was forthwith produced, and carefully examined. "Evil take me," cried James, "if twain so like be not an ill mark." Ruthven sealed his misplaced love with his blood, and was cut off, with his noble brother, Lord Gowrie, in the flower of life, a foolish and misguided, but not guilty man.

Arabella Stuart, daughter of the Earl of Lennox, and the King's first cousin, was another victim of the royal distrust. She had privately married Sir William Seymour, afterwards Duke of Somerset, and being committed to the Tower for an alleged misdemeanour, in contracting a marriage without the King's permission, made her escape from the ancient fortress in man's apparel, and set sail for France. Her flight, however, was soon discovered, and she was overtaken, placed under closer and stricter confinement, and finally ended her days a raving maniac.

We must pass by the harrowing crimes of the Countess of Somerset, who, after inspiring the heart and the muse of Sir Philip Sidney in the previous reign, cast such a blot on the annals of James ; yet we cannot but remark,

as an illustration of the effect of popular manners, the wide difference in the character of the same woman under opposite influences, insomuch that it is difficult to believe that this modern Cesonias was indeed the heroine of the Arcadia. Nor was she alone in her infamy, which scarcely surpassed that of Lady Lake and her daughter, Lady Rosse, who brought a false and iniquitous charge against their near relative, the innocent and beautiful Countess of Exeter, and audaciously supported it by suborned witnesses, and a forged document, purporting to be the voluntary confession of the Countess. The forgery, however, was discovered by James ; and the accusation being disproved, the two noble conspirators were publicly tried for perjury, found guilty, and heavily fined.

One of the most remarkable incidents of the reign of James was the romantic expedition of Prince Charles to Spain, to sue for the hand of the Infanta, and which, as affording a glance at Spanish manners in relation to a royal lady, may well claim a brief notice in our pages. The Prince left England secretly, and in disguise, accompanied only by Buckingham and three picked attendants ; and after several amusing adventures, arrived safely at Paris, where he announced himself as John Smith, while the more novel designation of *Thomas* Smith was assumed by Buckingham. With the help of false beards and periwigs, they disguised themselves so effectually, that, according to Herbert of Cherbury, the English ambassador, they entirely escaped recognition during their stay in the French capital, although present as spectators at a masqued ball at court, and constantly appearing in public. Narrowly avoiding detention at Bayonne, they preserved their disguise till they reached Madrid, when the celebrated Earl of Bristol made known their arrival to the King ; and Charles was instantly awarded a magnificent

reception. The Spanish people were as gratified and flattered by his visit as their monarch, and all classes, from the stately grandees to the humble muleteer, united in tendering their guest the most marked demonstrations of respect. Lopez de Vega attuned his lyre in honour of the Prince, whom he represents as declaring himself in the most emphatic manner—

“ Charles Stuart I am,
Love has guided me far ;
To the heaven of Spain—
To Maria my star.”

The Infanta is described as perfectly warranting the enthusiastic love of Charles. Howell, who accompanied his royal master, affirms that she is “a very comely lady, rather of a Flemish complexion than Spanish, fair haired, and carries a most pure mixture of red and white in her face.” But in the first instance, her princely lover was only permitted to view her at a distance, as Spanish etiquette, then even more rigid than now, forbade their associating, till a formal dispensation from the Pope had authorized and sanctioned their union. Still Ferdinand politely contrived that he should obtain a sight of the Infanta, on the first Sunday after his arrival ; and it was arranged between them that the whole royal family, including the youthful Princess, should appear on the Prado, in the King’s coach, while Charles rode incognito in the carriage of one of the courtiers. Everything went off as agreeably as could be expected on such an occasion. “The Infanta,” says Howell, describing the scene, “sat in the boot [of the coach], with a blue ribbon about her arm, on purpose that the Prince might distinguish her : there were about twenty coaches besides, of grandees, nobles, and ladies, that attended the party. As soon as the Infanta saw the Prince, her colour rose very high.”

But this mode of courtship, however consistent with the antique usages of Madrid, did not satisfy the romantic ardour of Charles ; and being informed that the Infanta was in the habit of spending the morning at a pleasant suburban château, a few miles from the capital, he ventured on the bold measure of repairing to this retreat, and lying wait for her in the gardens. After some time, he heard her voice in an adjacent orchard, the entrance to which, as it was the most private part of the grounds, was secured by a double door, absolutely groaning with fastenings. But it is well known that love laughs at locksmiths ; and Charles, unwilling to be baffled, managed to scale the wall, and jumping from the top, alighted at the feet of his astonished mistress. The Infanta, whether from joy or surprise, saluted the apparition with a scream, which brought up an old tutelary marquis, who, sinking on his knee, besought the royal lover to retire, as his intrusion might cost him his head. Such an appeal could not be resisted by the good-natured Prince, and he reluctantly withdrew, not, we may believe, without exchanging a tender glance with the Princess. Afterwards he was permitted to address her, but, from political causes, the match was ultimately broken off ; and Charles, returning to England, became the husband of the beautiful and unfortunate Henrietta Maria. He was now quickly plunged into other transactions, and a storm burst over Europe, which shook society to its depths.

The events of this troublous period were greatly influenced by the character and personal feelings of an English Princess—Elizabeth, sister of Charles, eldest daughter of James I., and latterly Queen of Bohemia, who, as the prime mover of the incidents which led to the sanguinary Thirty Years' War in Germany, involving a struggle between all the chief powers of Europe, and which, by developing

and fostering the fiery zeal of the Puritans, sowed the seeds of the Great Rebellion in England, may be said to have set the world in flames.

The heroine of this great historic drama was neither cruel nor arrogant, but, on the contrary, gentle and humane, moderate in her ambition, an affectionate sister, a loving and dutiful wife, a fond mother, and a devoted friend. Caught up, as it were, by a political whirlwind, and impelled along by the force of events, she acted less from choice than necessity, and was always swayed by the noblest and most pious sentiments. Her beauty and early virtues were the theme of universal admiration, even before she reached the age of womanhood ; and, among others, Ben Jonson, in a laudatory poem, complimented her royal parent on her endowments, in a spirit almost prophetic—

“ Nor shall less joy your regal hopes pursue
In that most princely maid, whose form might call
The world to war and make it hazard all
Its valour for her beauty ; she shall be
Mother of nations.”

The world was indeed called to war by her voice, and, as the mother of nations, her august descendants still occupy the thrones of England and Hanover.

Elizabeth was born in the far North, in the ancient palace of Falkland, on the 16th August, 1596 ; and a humble Scotchwoman, bearing the unpoetic name of Bessie Macdowall, had the honour of rearing the future parent of England's sovereigns. After the union of the two crowns, numerous proposals were made for her hand, and she narrowly escaped the misery of both a French and Spanish alliance, being, at length, bestowed in her seventeenth year, on Frederic V., Prince Palatine of the Rhine. The Prince, though handsome, gallant, and accomplished, so that he might boldly aspire to the love

and favour of any lady, had not ventured to present himself at the English court as a suitor without much previous preparation ; and a letter is still extant, in which he requests the Duke of Wurtemburgh, his friend and ally, to lend him the services of his dancing-master, that he may place himself under his effective tutelage. He had the good fortune to win the heart, as well as the hand of Elizabeth, to whom he was publicly betrothed in the December of 1612 ; but, owing to the melancholy death of her brother, Prince Henry, the beloved companion of her infancy and youth, the marriage was not solemnized till the following February, when, after being three times asked in church, the royal pair were happily united.

The Princess, on proceeding to Germany, took up her residence at the castle of Heidelberg, but occasionally retired to the pleasant shades of Fredericthal, where she spent her time in the masculine exercises of shooting and the chase. These indeed were her favourite diversions, and she delighted to roam through the forest with her gun, or in eager pursuit of the wild boar. Her fame as a sportswoman spread through Germany, and she was complimented with the flattering title of "the Diana of the Rhine ;" but this brief career of enjoyment was interrupted by maternal cares, too soon followed by vicissitudes, not more fatal to her consort and herself than to her adopted country.

The imperial throne was at this time occupied by Matthias of Hapsburg, who, himself childless, wished, in his old age, to preserve the elective sceptre of Bohemia as the inalienable inheritance of a collateral branch of his house, represented by Ferdinand of Austria ; and, with this view, installed Ferdinand as titular King, with a positive stipulation that he was not to exercise the sovereign authority during his life. But Ferdinand was not

to be restrained by such an engagement, and, a Roman Catholic and a bigot, he had no sooner obtained the crown, than he commenced a furious persecution of his Protestant subjects ; and, after repeated outrages, compelled them, in self-defence, to take up arms. In several conflicts, victory fell to the insurgents, while their cause began to excite the deepest interest and sympathy throughout Germany, and at this critical moment Matthias died, leaving the empire without a head. The Protestant Princes, fortified by an alliance with the States of Holland, and the dubious support of James I., now associated for mutual defence ; and the accession of Ferdinand to the imperial dignity seemed indeed to threaten both their liberties and their existence. Bohemia threw down the gage of battle, by electing Frederic, the husband of the Princess Elizabeth, to her vacant throne, and, at the same time, Hungary also revolted from Ferdinand, and bestowed the regal diadem on Bethlehem Gabor, Prince of Transylvania.

King James was very averse to the acceptance of the Bohemian sceptre by his youthful son-in-law ; but Frederic, not unwilling to be a monarch, was easily persuaded by Elizabeth to follow the thorny path of ambition, and, in company with the Princess, repaired to Prague, where they were solemnly invested with the crown. Spinola, with the combined imperial forces, was already in motion to attack him ; and as Frederic returned no answer to reiterated appeals for his submission, gradually drew nearer, and finally entered the Bohemian territories. In this alarming posture of affairs, Elizabeth, again on the point of becoming a mother, was urged to quit the dangerous vicinity of Prague, and seek a more secure residence, as the Imperialists had already earned an unenviable reputation for

brutality and ferocity, and, if made prisoner, she might incur personal peril. But the brave Queen steadily refused to leave her husband, and at such a moment, Frederic felt only too much in need of her presence and her counsel. His army, threatened on its flank by Spinola, was hastily drawn from the frontier to cover the capital; but while he flew to pass a few moments with the Queen, the enemy fell on his disordered battalions, and thus precipitated the memorable battle of Prague. At the first news of the action, Frederic sprang on his horse, and was spurring in all haste to the field, when he was met at the city gate by Count Anhalt, who, in breathless accents, informed him that all was lost. Nothing now remained but flight; and the poor Queen, at a time when she most needed attendance and repose, was hurried from the palace, and obliged to undertake a long, arduous, and perilous journey, partly performed on horseback, behind one of her servants, a young English yeoman, who overcame every difficulty, and ultimately placed her in safety within the walls of Breslau.

Her husband's affairs were not yet desperate, and the brave Count Mansfeldt, whose own life was a romance, remained faithful to his cause, while the chivalrous Christian of Brunswick was wholly devoted to the Queen. The attachment of Christian to Elizabeth was as sincere as it was romantic, and as honourable as sincere. Instead of a plume, his burnished helmet was adorned with her glove, while his motto—"Fur Gott und fur sie"—"for God and for her," really breathed the sentiment and the language of his honest, noble heart. Nor was he singular in this feeling, which was shared, with equal constancy, if not equal ardour, by a young English nobleman, the celebrated Earl Craven, who so often distinguished himself in her service. But the mad Brunswicker, as

Christian, from his reckless bravery, was called, proclaimed her name at the cannon's mouth, and after losing his arm at the side of Mansfeldt, in a severe action with the combined Spanish and imperial army, he sent a messenger to inform Elizabeth that he had still an arm left to fight, and a life to lose in her cause. Death, however, in an evil hour, deprived her of the support both of Christian and Mansfeldt ; and the pusillanimity, double-dealing, and treachery of her father materially aggravated her misfortunes. Forbidden to return to England, she found a humble refuge at the Hague, where, with her husband, she was often reduced to extreme pecuniary distress, only relieved, at long intervals, by the niggard hand of King James, and a small annual allowance from the States of Holland. But Europe still possessed a knight who could sympathize with the injured and oppressed, and the renowned Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden, buckled on his armour in behalf of Protestant Germany and the beautiful Elizabeth of Bohemia. In an incredibly short time he completely paralyzed the power of the imperialists, recovered the palatinate, and restored the hereditary authority of Frederic. But his career of glory was abruptly terminated, and the Swedes purchased the sanguinary victory of Lutzen with the life of their King. Frederic, now deprived of his last friend, was himself struck down by the plague, and expired in the prime of manhood, in November, 1632.

The public career of Elizabeth, though it was restricted, was not closed by the death of her husband, and in her sombre retreat at the Hague, she continued to exert herself in the name and the interest of her children. But her two sons speedily became unmanageable, and while Charles Louis, the eldest, assumed the direction of his own affairs, Rupert carried his reckless sword to the camp

of Charles I., and acquired a memorable name in England. Elizabeth lived to see the restoration of her nephew, Charles II., when she returned to her native land, and, in 1661, ended her chequered life at Leicester House, the residence of her devoted adherent, Lord Craven, to whom she was said to have been privately married.

Several illustrious women figure in the dark annals of the English civil war, and the heroic Countess of Derby, who resisted to the last the haughty power of Cromwell, and the gentle Countess of Sunderland, may be numbered among the foremost. Lady Fanshawe and kindly Lucy Hutchinson have themselves written the stirring tale of their lives, with a grace and feminine truthfulness rarely equalled ; and the famous Marchioness, more famous as the Duchess of Newcastle, who was prouder of her small literary honours than of the highest dignities of the peerage, has left behind her a name that will never be forgotten. Lucy, Countess of Carlisle, played a more prominent, though not so creditable a part, in the great political events of the time ; and as the friend and *confidante*, first of Strafford, and then of Pym, was now associated with the extreme royal, and now with the ultra-republican party, ending by denouncing both. As if to sustain in death the vanity of her life, she expired at her toilet, while preparing to pay a visit of ceremony to her early and often betrayed friend, Queen Henrietta Maria.

A still stranger fate befell the lovely Venetia Stanley, whom poetry and romance, combining with the malicious scandal of the day, have raised to the dignity of a heroine. This celebrated beauty was the daughter of Sir Edward Stanley of Tongue Castle, and passed her early years at Euston Park in Oxfordshire, where she had for her constant companion the son of a neighbour, afterwards the famous Sir Kenelm Digby ; and the two children, it is

said, now contracted for each other that ardent attachment which remained the passion of their lives. Even in childhood, Venetia's charms were the theme of universal admiration, and, as she approached womanhood, she was accounted a miracle of grace and beauty. Aubrey, by no means one of her friends, has preserved a glowing description of her appearance. "She had," he says, "a most lovely sweet round face, delicate dark brown hair dark brown eyebrows, about which was much sweetness, as also in the opening of her eyelids. The colour of her cheeks was that of the damask rose." A belle so captivating could not be approached without danger, and her arrival in town excited such a commotion among the beaux, that a court wag wrote over the door of her lodging the following friendly caution :—

—" Pray come not near,

For Dame Venetia Stanley lodges here."

A suspicious acquaintance with the Earl of Dorset has left a blemish on this part of Venetia's life ; and she is accused of having coquetted also with another nobleman, whose name is masked by Sir Kenelm Digby, under the inscrutable designation of Ursatino. The latter proceeding, if we are to believe the narrative of the lady's credulous husband, was attended by an incident very characteristic of the time. Venetia received a letter, requesting her to give a private meeting to Sir Kenelm, at a somewhat secluded spot, where they were not likely to be observed ; and on her way thither she was waylaid by five armed horsemen, who, presenting their naked poniards, threatened to kill her if she raised an outcry ; then taking possession of the carriage, they carried her off to a lonely country-house, where she found herself in the power of Ursatino. Her courage, however, remained unshaken ; and in the dead hour of the night, she noise-

lessly raised the window of her chamber, tied the sheets of her bed together, and let herself down to the ground. In escaping to the road, she was encountered by a wolf, and was in danger of being torn in pieces, when her loud cries, as she still flew along, brought to her assistance a young nobleman, who fortunately happened to be passing, and by whom she was conducted to a neighbouring mansion, belonging to a female relation. But the errors or the misfortunes of Venetia were more than counter-balanced, in the eyes of a grateful lover, by her unbounded generosity ; and Sir Kenelm was indebted to his munificent mistress for the means of defraying his expensive journey to France, on the occasion of his being appointed one of the escort of Henrietta Maria. At this time he was her accepted suitor, and they were soon united by the endearing tie of marriage.

It might be thought that Sir Kenelm Digby would now be content ; but a philosopher and chemist, as well as a doting husband, he wished to preserve unimpaired, if not to increase, the dazzling charms of his wife ; and, with this view, was continually presenting her with some new cosmetic, or carefully-prepared dish, intended to produce the desired effect. Macbeth's witches could hardly have devised more odious or more noxious compounds ; and the poor lady was feasted on such doubtful delicacies as capons fed with snakes, and wine distilled from vipers. At last, she was induced to swallow a venomous powder, which was to have the singular effect of making her madly in love with her husband ; and, in the morning, she was found dead on her pillow, her head lying on her hand, as if she were still in a gentle slumber.

Such were some of the strange delusions of the age, encouraged and shared by men of the highest intellect, and the noblest attainments. Among the vulgar, they

took another form, and broke forth, under the impulse of King James's essay on Demonology, in a furious crusade against witchcraft. In the course of time, every aged woman, whom infirmity or failing years rendered cross and fretful, ran the risk of being considered a witch, and, as such, might be brought to trial, and, on the slightest evidence, condemned and burnt. After an interval of two centuries, the blood boils at the tragic recital of this cruel and diabolical assize, which can only be paralleled by the great religious persecutions of Nero and Domitian. Hundreds of innocent women were accused of holding communication with the Evil One, brought to a mock trial, subjected to a barbarous and inhuman ordeal, and, in almost every instance, sentenced to be burnt. One mode of ascertaining their guilt was by lacerating their bodies with pins, three inches long; another, practised by the great witch-finder Hopkins, was that recommended by King James, in his notable essay,—namely, laying the suspected witch full length in a pond, stitched in a blanket, when if innocent she would sink and be drowned, but if guilty she would float, and then was adjudged to the stake. Many parishes appointed a witch-pricker as a regular local functionary, just as they did a sexton or a constable; and the office was one of no small emolument. But we can excuse the superstition of the vulgar, when we find the virtuous and estimable Sir Matthew Hale, as if suddenly transformed into a Bonner or a Jeffreys, finding two poor old women guilty of this imaginary crime, and pronouncing upon them the awful sentence of the law. Gradually this great delusion expired; but an aged dame was burnt as a witch so late as the reign of Queen Anne.

The Restoration, breaking the iron yoke of the Puritans, left the English people, wearied and disgusted by their long thralldom, at liberty to indulge unrestrained in every

vice and every excess. A court steeped in the lees of Continental depravity too readily led the way, infecting every class, to the humblest individual, with the same foul taint, so that the hideous moral leprosy sapped and blurred the whole fabric of society. The King's union with a virtuous and innocent princess, the unfortunate Catharine of Braganza, opposed no check to the headlong and overwhelming tide of profligacy and corruption. Catharine herself was insulted by the presentation of her husband's favourite at her first court ; and so indignant did she feel at the outrage, that, after a vain effort to repress her feelings, the blood gushed from her nose and mouth, and she was carried from the saloon insensible. Yet, in a little time, she was not only brought to tolerate the presence and the society of Lady Castlemaine, but even joined in the same dance with the equally infamous Duchess of Portsmouth, a French beauty, whom Louis XIV., more in the style of an Asiatic despot than a Christian king, had presented to Charles, through the ill-chosen medium of Henrietta of Orleans, his own sister. And a period came, when her regal honours had sunk so low, that the unprincipled Buckingham, ever ready for any villany, had the audacity to propose to Charles to carry her off to America, in order to afford him a pretext for a divorce—a proposal which the weak monarch, bad as he had become, still had the manliness to reject, though not the dignity to resent.

Virtue was now held so cheap, that it was constantly made the subject of lampoons and pasquinades, and women of all ranks, and of all ages, sat in the public theatre, with their unabashed faces prudently covered by masks, to hear and applaud the most odious imputations on their modesty, their character, and their sex. Religion was a byword, or a party cry, never referred to but in

mockery, or for the detestable purpose of pitting man against his brother ; and drinking, betting, gaming, flirtations, and intrigues, pursued openly, in the face of day, and in utter disregard of observation, were the ordinary occupations of women of every sphere. In the highest circles, vice was so unblushingly practised, that the Countess of Shrewsbury, after being convicted of numerous irregularities, did not scruple to attend Buckingham in a duel with the dishonoured Earl, and, disguised as a page, meekly held the horse of her lover, while he ran his sword through her husband. Amiable exceptions, indeed, there were, to the general demoralization, and among these, the honoured names of Mrs. Godolphin and Mary Evelyn shone pre-eminent, and still claim our sympathy, our respect, and our veneration.

Count Hamilton has left us, in his amusing *Memoirs of De Grammont*, a too faithful picture of the manners and usages of the court, and its daily derelictions, forcibly representing the general tone of the age. This may draw a feeble illustration from a morning's adventure of a lady who afterwards became his own wife, but who at the time was Maid of Honour to the Duchess of York, and distinguished by the flattering appellation of *La Belle Jennings*. It happened that the notorious Earl of Rochester, having fallen into disgrace at Court, had, in one of his mad fits, disguised himself as a German doctor, and, taking a lodging in an obscure part of the town, set up as an astrologer. All the town was soon seized with a vehement desire to consult this oracle of fate, and Miss Jennings, though a very prudent young damsel, as Maids of Honour always are, naturally shared the universal infatuation, being at the moment particularly anxious to know why a certain person, who should be nameless, did not propose to an exceedingly handsome lady, with whom

he appeared to be desperately in love, and who was willing to give him all reasonable encouragement. She imparted her secret wish to Miss Price, the indulgent mistress of the Maids ; and it was arranged, after a long consultation, that they should visit the magician together, disguised as orange-girls, and so gratify their curiosity without revealing their station. Accordingly, one fine morning they started *in a hackney coach*, each furnished with a basket of oranges, the better to sustain her assumed character ; and they had made some progress, when, approaching the Theatre Royal, where the Duchess of York was then witnessing the performance, a malignant spirit suggested to the foolish Miss Price that it would be an unrivalled feat to enter the playhouse, and sell their oranges directly in front of the royal box. Miss Jennings indiscreetly agreed, and alighting, they made their way to the door, just as Sydney and Killigrew, two of the greatest lady-killers of the day, were directing their steps to the same point. The fair Price instantly accosted Sydney ; but that great beau, dressed for conquest, was too intent on other thoughts to notice either the humble street beauty or her oranges. Not so Killigrew, whose quick eye was at once struck and captivated by their appearance, and while he pretended to scrutinize Price's basket, he audaciously chucked Jennings under the chin. The Maid of Honour fired at such a salutation, and, quite forgetting her oranges, asked him how he presumed, how he dared, to offer her so great an affront ! " Ha ! ha !" cried Killigrew, " here's a rarity, indeed !" But, before he could proceed further, Price, fearing discovery, dragged her indignant companion away.

Taking another coach, they now resumed their journey to the astrologer's, and, at length, reached the end of the squalid street in which he lodged. Here they alighted,

and leaving their oranges in the coach, resolved, in order to avert suspicion, to proceed to the magician's door on foot. But as evil fortune would have it, they were at this moment confronted by another ruffling courtier, the gay Lord Brouncker, who had been attracted by the strange spectacle of two orange-girls in a hackney coach, and now dashed in between them. In vain they turned away their heads; Brouncker, determined to have a nearer view of their faces, and restrained by no scruples, dodged from side to side, and from one to the other, till, accomplishing his object, he recognised them both. This, however, he took care to conceal, while he assailed them with the coarsest sarcasms and abuse; and with difficulty they escaped back to the coach, which, to their dismay, they found surrounded by a mob of boys, who had made a desperate rush at their oranges, and the sturdy coachman, emulating the spirit of the days of chivalry, was so bent on defending his charge, that it required all their united eloquence to prevail upon him to throw the worthless fruit into the middle of the street, and make the best of his way off with themselves.

But we can hardly blame the little follies of Maids of Honour, when on one occasion the Queen herself was guilty of a similar frolic. Lord Braybrooke, in his interesting *History of Audley-End*, has preserved an amusing account of this adventure, which occurred at Saffron Walden, in Essex. It appears that a fair was held at that dismal old hole, while her majesty was staying at the neighbouring mansion of Audley-End, then a royal palace; and Catharine, no doubt prompted by others, determined to visit it in disguise. The Duchess of Buckingham and the lovely Duchess of Richmond readily entered into her design, and they started from the palace together, dressed as country lasses, and each mounted on

a cart-horse, behind a gay cavalier transformed into a bumpkin. Henshaw, who was probably a spectator of the strange cavalcade, describes the progress of the party with inimitable felicity. "They had all so overdone it in their disguise," says this worthy man, "and looked so much more like antiques than country folk, that as soon as they came to the fair the people began to go after them ; but the Queen going to a booth to buy a pair of yellow stockings for her sweetheart, and Sir Bernard Gascoigne asking for a pair of gloves streaked with blue, for his sweetheart, they were soon by their gibberish found to be strangers, which drew a bigger flock about them. One amongst them had seen the Queen at a dinner, knew her, and was proud of her knowledge ; this soon brought all the fair into a crowd to stare at the Queen. Being thus discovered, they as soon as they could got to their horses ; but as many of the fair as had horses got up with their wives, children, sweethearts, or neighbours behind them, to get as much gape as they could, till they brought them to the court-gate. Thus, by ill conduct, was a merry frolic turned into a penance."

But such incidents, though they illustrate the loose spirit, fail to convey an idea of the license of the time, which pervaded the whole nation, and shed its baneful influence alike on high and low, rich and poor. Its real extent can only be gathered from the minute entries of Pepys, who, alas ! grave Secretary though he was, was himself but mortal, and often indulged in a little—let us hope, innocent—flirtation, even at church. Here is an instance of his weakness on the memorable afternoon of Sunday, the 18th of August, 1667 :—"I walked towards Whitehall, but being wearied, walked into St. Dunstan's Church, where I heard an able sermon of the minister of the place, and stood by a pretty modest maid, whom I

did labour to take by the hand ; but she would not, but got further and further from me ; and, at last, I could perceive her to take pins out of her pocket to prick me, if I should touch her again—which, seeing, I did forbear, and was glad I did spy her design. And then I fell to gaze upon another pretty maid, in a pew close to me, and she on me ; and I did go about to take her by the hand, which she suffered a little, and then withdrew.”

So great was the dissoluteness of the age, that the three visitations of war, fire, and pestilence, the heaviest scourges of the human race, which successively fell on the land, seem, even at this distance of time, like the wrathful judgments of Heaven, specially inflicted on a wicked people. Yet, amidst the universal demoralization, the kindly elevating influence of woman was not entirely absent ; and De Foe mentions, in his awful narrative, the tender devotion of a young girl to her lover, who had been smitten with the plague, and whom, regardless of herself, she attended and nursed in his extremity, bringing him successfully through the attack. Her assiduous care entailed the fearful penalty of infection ; and scarcely was her lover restored, when the fatal spots appeared on her own pale face, and she had to look for help to him. He proved equally grateful and successful ; and the loving pair survived, as they deserved, to unite their fortunes by a more sacred, though, in their case, it could hardly be a more endearing tie.

In France, the long reign of Louis XIV. produced no real improvement in the national manners, and the condition of woman became, if possible, still more degraded. During his younger days, the Grand Monarque had even exceeded the licence of Charles II. ; and the vices of the English court were, after all, but a coarse imitation of the splendid depravity of Versailles. In his later years,

Louis fell into the hands of his confessors, who, mistaking remorse for piety, endeavoured to mould him into a saint ; and, by their advice, he is said to have privately married the widow of Scarron, whom he created Marchioness de Maintenon, and who was the last arbitress of his court. But this union was never publicly recognised, and, consequently, could have no effect on society, which indeed had become so thoroughly debased, that it treated with ridicule, as mere idle forms, the most sacred restraints of morality and religion. The same tone marked the inglorious reign of Louis XV., which heralded the catastrophe of the French Revolution, when they who had sowed the storm reaped the whirlwind.

Ward, in his *London Spy*, and Walpole, in his letters, have graphically delineated the manners of their time during the intervening generations, embracing the long *régime* of black patches, hoops, and monster bonnets. The low moral condition of women of rank is vividly represented in the novels of Fielding and the curt poems of Swift ; and Lady Mary Montague, in her "Town Eclogue," gives a diverting account of the frivolous pursuits of these leaders of fashion. A noble lady's shopping is thus described :—

"Straight then I'll dress and take my wonted range,
Through Indian shops, to Motteux's, or the Change,
Where the tall jar erects its stately pride
With antic shapes in China's azure dyed.
There, careless lies a rich brocade unroll'd,
Here shines a cabinet with burnish'd gold.
But then, alas ! I must be forc'd to pay,
And bring no penn'orths, nor a fan away."

The "Indian houses," mentioned by the fair poetess, were, according to other accounts, not altogether such innocent places of resort ; and the woman of quality,

whose tall black footman assisted her to alight from a sumptuous chariot, often came to the Oriental mart to meet a lover, or make an assination. Raffles, lotteries, and auctions, with a drive or promenade on the Mall, occupied the rest of the day, which began at noon, and long after midnight, terminated in the glaring shades of Ranelagh or Vauxhall.

Pope alludes to the prevalent custom of late rising in describing the chamber of Belinda—

“ Sol through white curtains shot a timorous ray,
And op'd those eyes that must eclipse the day.
Now lapdogs give themselves the rousing shake,
And sleepless lovers just at twelve awake.
Thrice rung the bell, the slipper knock'd the ground,
And the press'd watch return'd a silver sound.
Belinda *still* her downy pillow press'd.”

The same brilliant muse has afforded us a partial glimpse of the fair Belinda's toilet—

“ And now unveil'd the toilet stands display'd,
Each silver vase in mystic order laid.
* * * * *
This casket India's glowing gems unlocks,
And all Arabia breathes from yonder box :
The tortoise here and elephant unite,
Tranform'd to combs, the speckl'd and the white ;
Here files of pins extend their shining rows,
Puffs, powders, patches, bibles, billet-doux.”

A period so fruitful of social infirmity yet gave to the world some memorable women, eminent for their talents, their career, or their virtues. Romance still boasts of the devoted attachment of Flora Macdonald for the misguided Pretender ; and the famous Duchess of Marlborough has found a niche in the granite temple of history. In contrast with her great fortunes, her sister, the lovely Duchess of

Tyrconnell, the same fair Jennings whose adventures as an orange-girl we have recorded at p. 385, fell into the most abject poverty, and is supposed to have obtained a scanty subsistence in her old age by keeping a stall at the Exchange : while, on the other hand, Anne Clarges, the wife, or, as some say, the mistress of a private soldier, was raised to the highest rank as Duchess of Albemarle.

But a still more memorable example of those favoured few whose lot it is to have greatness thrust upon them, is afforded by the Empress Catharine of Russia, consort of Peter the Great. Born at an obscure village, near Dorpt, in Livonia, the natural daughter of a poor country girl, Catharine never knew who was her father. When only three years old, the sudden death of her mother left her an orphan, and, about the same time she was deprived of her generous protector, Count Rosen, on whose estate she was born, and who, by kindly admitting her into his house, had preserved her from perishing. Her destitute condition excited the sympathy and compassion of a pious Lutheran minister, named Glack, residing at the neighbouring town of Marienburg, and he received her into his family, and, as she grew older, employed her to attend on his children. In this situation she remained till her eighteenth year, when she married a bold dragoon, one of the Swediah garrison of the town, who had stormed and carried the weak fortress of her heart ; but, it is said, that just as the marriage ceremony was concluded, the unlucky bridegroom was marched off with a detachment to Riga, without being able to take leave of his bride ; though others assert, with equal confidence, that he did not quit the town till eight days after his nuptials. Be this as it may, he was absent from Marienburg when it surrendered to the Russians, and he was destined never to meet Catharine again. The widowed bride, as she might now be considered, fell into

the hands of the victors, and was taken under the protection of General Bauer, residing in his quarters in the ostensible capacity of his housekeeper. Here her extraordinary beauty attracted numerous admirers, and among others, the celebrated Menschikoff, who, from selling pies in the streets of St. Petersburg, had been raised by Peter the Great to the highest posts in the empire, and now enjoyed the rank of prince.

At the period of her first acquaintance with this personage, Catharine was remarkable for the brilliant purity of her complexion, to which her full dark eyes, ever beaming with tenderness, gave a peculiar effect, mantling her in an atmosphere of light; and her long flaxen tresses were dyed black to add the charm of contrast. Her figure was slight, but faultless; her movements were marked by a natural grace, which no art could equal; and her demeanour, kind and affable to all, exhibited a rare combination of modesty, dignity, and ease. She could neither read nor write, yet such was the force of her understanding, that she was found capable of conducting the most important affairs in the greatest exigencies; and always expressed herself with fluency, eloquence, and point. Menschikoff soon snatched this dazzling prize from the veteran Bauer; and she remained under his roof till, on an eventful morning, in her twenty-first year, she was seen by his imperial master, and then the poor serf-girl again changed hands, and passed to the palace of the Czar. From this moment she became so indispensable to Peter, that he made her his companion in all his expeditions, and she cheerfully shared the hardships and dangers of his successive campaigns. The sweetness of her temper, the unfailing kindness of her heart, her gentleness, docility, and vivacity, won more and more upon him; and his hereditary melancholy and even his

madness vanished under the influence of her presence. As we have lately seen the fierce lion tamed by a young girl, so this wild man was subdued and softened by the mild Catharine ; and so much was he under her control, that his orders for the execution of great criminals were always given secretly, lest he should be induced, by her intercession, to grant a pardon. At length, he privately conferred upon her the name, though not the honours of a wife, which satisfied her heart, though it did not improve her position. But fortune had reserved for her a destiny still more brilliant. In the campaign against the Turks, in 1711, the reckless impetuosity of Peter involved his army in a most perilous situation, from which extrication seemed impossible, and, seized with one of his gloomy fits, he shut himself up in his tent to await the issue, giving orders that he should on no account be disturbed. Catharine then ventured on the bold step of acting in his name, without his knowledge, and dexterously concluded a most advantageous treaty with the Turks, which effected the deliverance of both the Emperor and the army. Peter was overjoyed at the result ; and, in his admiration of her talents, publicly acknowledged her as his wife, carried her in triumph to Moscow, and himself placed on her head the imperial diadem.

Catharine's manners and address in this exalted station, instead of exciting criticism and ridicule, as her low origin might have led us to expect, captivated both rich and poor ; but her personal conduct was not altogether so irreproachable, and she is said to have entertained too strong a predilection for the society of her chamberlain. It appears that they held stolen interviews, and on one occasion, Peter surprised them together in a secluded arbour, in the private palace of the gardens, while the

chamberlain's sister, Madame Balcke, with a favourite page, was lingering near the spot, as if to guard against intrusion. Peter was so infuriated, that he struck Catharine over the shoulders with his cane, and then left the place, without saying a word. Mons, whose indiscretion or presumption could not be forgiven, was arrested, accused of bribery and embezzlement, and, after a formal trial, brought to the block. Madame Balcke was punished with ten strokes of the knout, and banishment to Siberia : and the unfortunate page, though the son of a nobleman, was condemned to serve as a private soldier, and despatched to a distant and unhealthy station. Catharine herself narrowly escaped the imperial vengeance. As soon as Mons was beheaded, she was taken in a carriage beneath a gibbet, surmounted by the chamberlain's head, and Peter, sitting at her side, eagerly watched the effect of the spectacle. But she preserved her composure, and merely exclaimed in a tone of indifference—"What a pity that courtiers are so corrupt !"

Peter did not long survive this tragic incident ; and as he expired rather suddenly, it was thought that his death was precipitated by poison, administered by the hand of Catharine. The conjecture, however, is wholly unsupported by evidence ; and, indeed, is at variance with the character and habits of the Empress, as well as all the known facts. It may easily be traced to the malice of her enemies, who vehemently opposed her retention of power ; but, by the aid of Menschikoff, and her own resolution and judgment, she seized the reins of government, and succeeded in maintaining her authority. She still remained the beneficent mistress of her people, ever exerting herself to modify and improve the condition of the lower classes, and particularly to abolish the barbarous custom of capital punishment, so fearfully prevalent in

preceding reigns ; but, in private life, she indulged in lamentable excesses, drinking quantities of Tokay wine and ardent spirits, and passing whole nights in the open air. A virulent cancer, which the rude skill of the time and country was unable to cure, became fatal under such continued dissipation, and carried her off in the thirty-ninth year of her age, and the second of her reign.

In the next generation, Germany produced an Empress who rivalled Catharine in her great natural capacity, in her personal beauty, and in her singular good fortune, but who was happier in preserving an irreproachable and spotless name. Maria Theresa, the celebrated Empress-Queen of Germany and Hungary, was the daughter of Charles VI., and was born at Vienna, in 1717. At the age of nineteen, she became the consort of Francis, Grand Duke of Tuscany, a prince to whom she was tenderly attached, and who, on the death of her father, inherited with her the extensive territories of the house of Austria. But, although her rights were guaranteed by solemn treaties, she had no sooner assumed the sovereign authority, than claims were advanced on all sides to different portions of her hereditary dominions, and, at the same time, the French party bestowed the imperial diadem on the Elector of Bavaria, and the renowned Frederic of Prussia seized the important province of Silesia. But pitted against this potent adversary, assailed on one side by the Elector of Bavaria, in conjunction with the mighty hosts of France, and, on the other, by the Elector of Saxony and the King of Poland, the great Empress-Queen maintained her cause with unshaken courage, firmness, and majesty. Summoning the states of the kingdom to meet her at Presburg, she presented herself, with her infant son in her arms, in the midst of her nobles, and delivered an address so elo-

quent and touching, that the whole assembly drew their swords, and solemnly dedicated their lives to her service. An army was promptly raised, and succeeded in relieving the beleagured city of Vienna, though, from the previous successes of the enemy, it was unable to prevent the capture of Prague, where the Elector of Bavaria, now master of the capital, was crowned King of Bohemia. At this critical moment Maria Theresa was opposed to nearly all the powers of Europe, and possessed but a solitary ally—England ; but, with her assistance, she made a bold and glorious stand, and at length contrived, by wise concessions, to pacify the Kings of Prussia and Poland, and the Elector of Saxony. The war, prosecuted with unwearied energy and vigour, now brought her a rich harvest of victory ; and, in 1743, she was invested at Prague with the regal insignia of Bohemia, and placed on the brow of her husband the imperial crown of Germany. The tardy peace of Aix-la-Chapelle fully acknowledged her rights, ratified her conquests, and confirmed her in all her dominions, with the exception of Silesia, which, in the hour of her extreme necessity, she had reluctantly ceded to Prussia. That gem of her crown, indeed, she was still unwilling to surrender, and though for a time compelled to yield, she secretly formed a league with the Elector of Saxony, the King of Poland, and the Empress Catherine II. of Russia, mainly with a view to its recovery. The combination was discovered by the great Frederic, who, by his sagacity and decision, frustrated the plans of his august rival, and ultimately dissolved the confederacy. Still, Maria Theresa adhered to her purpose, and foiled in the North, formed an alliance with France, while Frederic, assisted by England, boldly anticipated the impending shock by striking the first blow, and, marching into Bohemia, commenced the long struggle of the Seven Years' War. Both sides

maintained the strife with varying success, but equal obstinacy, till, at last, the scale was turned in favour of the Empress by the accession of Russia, which brought the Prussian hero to the brink of ruin. But the character of Frederic rose with the difficulties and the exigencies of his situation, and by incredible efforts, by judicious and energetic movements, and by his strategic skill, he finally extricated himself from his dangerous position, and, on the conclusion of peace, remained in undisputed possession of Silesia. On the other hand, Maria Theresa obtained the imperial succession for her son Joseph, elected King of the Romans, and, by the events of the war, fused and permanently consolidated the various scattered elements of Austrian power. She was an unwilling accessory to the dismemberment of Poland, which she opposed as well from policy as principle ; but her scruples, finding no support from her ministers, were overruled by the young King Joseph, who, urging religious arguments, interested her piety in the measure. This was her last act in the great councils of Europe.

Successful and renowned in war, Maria Theresa was no less eminent in peace, and while she upheld the integrity, continually sought to advance the interests and promote the permanent prosperity of her dominions. She was a munificent benefactress of the arts and sciences, and encouraged and rewarded every useful invention. Literature, so long neglected, obtained her special protection, and she sought to develop the same taste in her subjects, by the establishment and liberal endowment of numerous schools and colleges. She was equally attentive to the interests of commerce, and, under her auspices, new sources of trade were opened, roads and canals constructed, spacious harbours formed, and manufactures of every kind fostered and extended. No sovereign was ever more beloved,

and, from the outset of her long and troubled reign, she obtained and merited the title of "mother of her people."

The career and fate of her daughter, the beautiful and unfortunate Marie Antoinette, offer a lamentable contrast to that of the Empress-Queen. From the peaceful end of the one, we turn reluctantly to what may be considered the death-chamber of the other—the revolutionary Hall of Judgment, and its inhuman tribunal. The once lovely Queen now retains no trace either of youth or beauty ; her wan features are furrowed and disfigured by wrinkles ; her hair is whitened by sorrow ; her form bent and drooping. Paris has arrayed all its refuse and all its sin to witness and applaud her abasement ; and *sans culottes*, and dissolute, abandoned women throng the avenues, the galleries, and the court. Marie Antoinette stands mute before them, her hands clasped tightly together, as if to repress her outraged feelings. She listens with calm dignity, but deep inward emotion, to the insulting and abusive tirade of the public accuser as he successively charges her with the sanguinary excesses of the Medicis and the vices of Messalina ; but when, to these shocking and unfounded imputations, he adds the diabolical guilt of Agrippina, nature can no longer be restrained, and she bursts into a passionate exclamation of agony and horror. The most obdurate could not resist so sublime an appeal ; and the unsexed furies of the reign of terror, the spawn and progeny of the revolution, retaining nothing of woman but her form, vehemently screamed forth their disapprobation of the charge. Still it was repeated ; and the fallen Queen, standing at the bar of this monstrous court, had to sustain the same cruel ordeal, without respite or refreshment, for twenty weary hours, the long night having passed away before it was announced that only her life could

expiate her crimes. Not till she was once more in the solitude of her dungeon did she yield to the crushing weight of her misfortunes, and seek a woman's relief in tears. But even in this bitter moment, the conviction of an existence to come, which she was soon to enter, afforded consolation and fortitude, raising her stricken soul from earth to Heaven. Her last thoughts were given to her children. "I embrace thee," she wrote to a cherished friend, "and my poor dear children. My God ! how painful it is to be forced to leave them for ever !"

A miserable cart conveyed the daughter of Maria Theresa to the place of execution. Seated on a bare board, with her hands pinioned behind her, she was dragged to the Place de la Revolution through a mob of infuriated demons, whose yells and execrations rent the air. Once only she betrayed emotion, when her eye, suddenly awaking to the objects around, caught a glimpse of the distant Tuileries, the scene of her brief season of happiness and power. But the delusive glories of the world were now as nothing to her ; she was already at the foot of the scaffold ; and with a light step, she ascended the fatal platform. The executioner took off her neckerchief and cap, disclosing those luxuriant tresses, so early grey, which had once been a brighter adornment than the queenly diadem, and in a moment the head of Marie Antoinette lay bleeding in the dust.

This stormy era was essentially fatal to royalty, whether inherited from a line of ancestors, or derived from the more novel source of popular suffrage ; and France, after bringing her hereditary sovereign to the block, calmly beheld the Queen of her choice hurled from the throne. Josephine Beauharnais was a widow when she first attracted the attention of Napoleon. She was a colonial beauty, being by birth a Creole ; and in her

infancy, a negro sorceress had predicted, what was forgotten till after the event, that she would one day be more than a Queen. Her husband had been a general in the army, but during the reign of terror, he was suspected of being noble, and for this heinous crime was condemned to the guillotine. After the Revolt of the Sections, her son Eugene, then only ten years of age, presented himself before the youthful General Buonaparte, and solicited the restoration of his father's sword. Napoleon was not more touched by the petition than by the appearance and demeanour of the suppliant, and kindly handed him the weapon, which the child, as he pressed it to his bosom, bathed with tears. This increased the sympathy of the hero, and he treated Eugene with so much consideration, that on the following day Madame Beauharnais called at his quarters to make her acknowledgments; and at their first interview, Napoleon, amidst the anxieties and perplexities of his situation, was captivated by her suavity and her beauty. An acquaintance commenced, and, growing daily more tender, speedily led to their marriage, an event which, twelve days after its celebration, procured for the fortunate bridegroom the command of the army of Italy. Rapidly he rose, like a rocket—or rather a comet, dazzling and bewildering; and Josephine, whom the Revolution had but lately thrown into a dungeon, was now solemnly invested with the imperial crown.

Her *régime* was eminently splendid, and, at the same time, had the higher merit of being useful—for she afforded both literature and art her constant and munificent protection. Under her auspices, society, so long convulsed, again took form and shape; and the frightful reign of anarchy was succeeded by that of order and virtue.

One of the most interesting traits in the character of

Josephine was her complete devotion to Napoleon, who himself said that he was the man she loved best in the world. Bourrienne relates, on the authority of the Emperor, that she was always ready to attend him, at any hour, and under all circumstances; and would persist in being his companion in his most fatiguing journeys. "If I stepped into my carriage at midnight," remarked the hero, "to my surprise I would find Josephine prepared, although I had had no idea of her accompanying me. 'But,' I would say, 'you cannot possibly go: the journey is too great, and is beyond your strength.' 'Not at all.' 'But I must set out instantly.' 'Well, I am quite ready.' 'Impossible! you will want no end of baggage.' 'Oh no; it is all packed, and I am prepared to start.' " And so Napoleon was obliged to yield.

What a consolation, had he but retained in his fall this tender partner of his prosperity! He might then have exclaimed with Mithridates, that he should 'never cease to be a monarch, so long as he possessed Josephine. But the career of the unhappy Empress, not less marvellous than his own, was destined to have another end; and she was raised to the highest point of human greatness that she might know the most bitter humiliation.

Such are the strange vicissitudes of life, not more apparent in the history of the past than in the events now passing before us, and which, within a few years, have advanced the living representative of Napoleon, as rapidly as Josephine, from a prison to a throne.

It would be an omission not to notice another illustrious Queen of the great revolutionary epoch, which forms such a tableau round her figure. Louise, Queen of Prussia, surnamed the Good, is one of the heroines of her country, and of history. At a time when Europe was devastated by the armies of Napoleon, Prussia, under the sway of its

amiable King, Frederic, remained peaceful and prosperous, an oasis in the desert ; and a contented people rendered a willing allegiance to a virtuous court. But Napoleon was waiting only a favourable moment to destroy this concord ; and his violation of the territory of Anspach, a dependency of Prussia, in 1805, unmasked his designs, and excited the generous resentment of the nation. The Queen was foremost in evincing this feeling ; but a powerful peace party, under the minister Hangwitz, divided the council of Frederic, and vehemently opposed hostilities. Louise foresaw that they could not be long deferred ; she was animated by the noblest motives, and she felt strong in the loyalty and patriotism of Prussia. While she was fostering this spirit, the Russian Emperor, Alexander, paid a visit to Berlin ; and the Queen sought to strengthen the position of Prussia, by an appeal to those natural sympathies by which the two courts had so long been united. At midnight she quitted the gorgeous saloon of the palace, and led the Emperor and King by torchlight to the tomb of the great Frederic, in the garrison church of Potsdam ; and here, over the coffin of the hero, she pledged them to assist and defend each other. The Emperor kissed the pall of the illustrious dead, and, taking Frederic's hand, ratified the compact. Napoleon's victory at Austerlitz gave new strength to the peace party, but it did not shake the resolution of the Queen, and she expressed her willingness to risk her life in the cause of Prussia. Every day she was seen on horseback in the streets of Berlin, at the head of her regiment of hussars, attired in military costume ; and everywhere she awoke the strong depths of national enthusiasm. Her intrepidity, her amiable disposition, and her extraordinary personal beauty, were all characteristics of a heroine, and alike contributed to kindle patriotism and to inspire

martial ardour. The war feeling became overpowering ; the Prussian officers sharpened their sabres on the windowsills of the French ambassador ; and at length the rupture became complete. Louise, inspired by the occasion, resolved to accompany the army to the field, and share its fatigues and its perils. Her intention reached the ears of Napoleon, and the hero could dread the effect of her presence. "They have given us a rendezvous for the 8th," he observed to Marshal Berthier ; "we are told that a beautiful Queen is to be a spectator of the combat." Nor could he conceal his chagrin from the troops, though he sought to cover it with a boast. "The Queen of Prussia," he announced in a bulletin to the army, "is with her soldiers, dressed as an Amazon, wearing the uniform of her regiment of dragoons, and writing twenty letters a day to excite the feelings of the people. We seem to behold Armida setting fire to her own palace."

One of Napoleon's precipitate marches entangled the Prussians in a battle before they could be joined by the Russians ; and the disastrous fields of Jena and Auerstadt destroyed all their hopes. Napoleon, sensible of the intrepid spirit of the Queen, hastened to meet Alexander at Tilsit, and arrange the terms of peace before Louise could interpose. Frederic and his consort did not reach the scene of the conference till this object had been accomplished. "Had the Queen of Prussia," said the victor, "arrived earlier at our conference, it might have had much influence on the result of our negotiations ; but happily, she did not make her appearance till all was settled." The poor Queen was justly indignant at conduct so perfidious. At first, she could not be prevailed upon to see Napoleon ; but, sacrificing her resentment to the interest of Prussia, she yielded, at last, to the counsel of Alexander, and reluctantly assented to an interview.

She met the iron hero with a cry of "Justice! justice!" Napoleon, to whom the exclamation might well seem a reproach, endeavoured to soothe her, and, at the same time, sought to vindicate himself. But he found the task extremely difficult. "In truth," he observes, "in spite of my address and utmost efforts, she constantly led the conversation, returned at pleasure to her subject, and directed it as she chose; but still with so much tact and delicacy, that it was impossible to take offence." But Napoleon, deaf to the plea of justice, could not be moved by the eloquence of a beautiful and injured Queen; and, after this memorable interview, Louise could never be persuaded to see him again.

The mortal remains of Louise are interred at Charlottenburg, in a simple but tasteful mausoleum, terminating an avenue of noble trees. No inscription marks the last resting-place of one who, indeed, has impressed her name and memory, a national souvenir, on every Prussian heart; and her beauty, her misfortunes, and her heroism are recalled by an exquisite marble figure, representing the lovely Queen in a recumbent attitude, her arms folded over her bosom, her face upturned—

"So fair, so calm, so softly seal'd,
The first last look by death reveal'd."

History has yet to trace the influence of woman in more recent times; and, indeed, it may safely be asserted, that in no age has woman appeared in a nobler light than the present; since in England alone we so lately possessed such heroines as Grace Darling and Lady Sale, and can still boast of Miss Nightingale and her assistants. The day is past when woman, inspired by the necessities of an iron age, could repudiate the weakness of her sex, and contend with man on the field of battle. Christianity

and civilization have taught her to renounce such ideas, and to assume another and more glorious duty. The new mission is symbolized by the name of FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE, its originator, its apostle, and its example. Born in a position which secured her every social advantage, and endowed with rare mental and personal gifts, this noble woman has devoted herself, in the flower of her life, to the mournful task of supplying the wants, of soothing and assuaging the agonies, of the maimed and the diseased. Florence Nightingale is the daughter of W. S. Nightingale, Esq., of Embley Park, Romsey, and Lea Hurst, Derbyshire. Though still in the summer of life, she passed some years in preparing, by visits to infirmaries and reformatory institutions, for "that good part which shall not be taken from her;" and, while she might have been a welcome guest in the radiant saloons of fashion, preferred to stand by the couch of suffering, to smoothe the pillow of the dying, and to close the eyes of the dead. Many are the dark lazar-houses which she has entered, a messenger of peace, bringing light, if not healing, with her words—the light of woman's tenderness, sympathy, providence, and care. The hoarse voice of war called her to a wider and more awful sphere—to minister to heaps of wounded, in crowded and pestilential hospitals, and a distant land. Not alone, indeed, was she permitted to undertake the solemn trust, and associates worthy of herself gathered round her, and arranged themselves under the same banner. In comparison with such genuine heroism, how vain and frivolous are the most splendid delusions of ancient times! The prodigies of fable, the mighty revelations of history, convey no lesson so beautiful, so ennobling, so sublime. This young and accomplished woman, assuming the helmet of salvation, and putting on the whole armour of light, goes forth a spiritual Joan

d'Arc, to combat the worst enemies, not of her own countrymen alone, but of her species—suffering, mortal agony, pestilence, and despair. Around rises every horror that can afflict and appal the soul,—the bleeding and mangled form, the frightful contortions of disease, and the last sad struggle of poor human clay ; while her ear is assailed by the groan of pain, the cry of anguish, or the ravings of delirium ; and, through all, her gentle woman's heart maintains its courage, and adheres to its mission. It is for her, indeed, the dying soldier looks when he bids a last farewell to the big wars, to glory, and to earth. Where the ministers of religion fail to cheer or console, the tender accents of Florence Nightingale give a Christian consolation and hope ; and we are assured, on the authority of several clergymen who have lately returned from the East, that she is frequently summoned to the bedside of the dying for this purpose, at all hours of the night, and always with effect.

Miss Nightingale is eminently qualified to inaugurate a principle which has opened to woman a new destiny. Her high courage, her resolution, and her devotedness, while they indicate the energy and decision of her character, are associated with the softest instincts and sympathies of our nature. Her large mind enables her to grasp, at one and the same moment, the highest aspirations of religion, the noblest impulses of humanity, and the minutest details of the hospital routine. Hence she is as useful in her humblest as in her loftiest functions ; and her admirable superintendence is felt and seen in every arrangement.

In the midst of her fatigues, her toils, and her dangers, she is surrounded by loving eyes and grateful hearts, by the prayers of her country and the admiration of

mankind. What greater end can a holy ambition covet, or an earthly sphere afford ?

While the name and dignity of woman is thus supported by her innate excellence, Royalty, which has so many representatives in these pages, continues to present some of the brightest examples of the sex, and the sway of Victoria is endeared to the hearts of millions. Nor would it be possible to adduce a higher illustration of the female character, in connexion either with the tender relations of domestic life, or the influences of her exalted station, than that august Queen who has graciously honoured this book with the countenance of her name.

THE END.

